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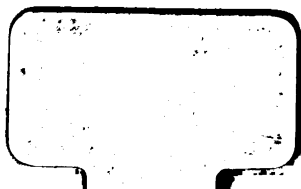
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# THE BROTHERS



or TALES OF LONG AGO

1489 . f. 1630







# THE BROTHERS









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# The BROTHERS

or

TALES OF LONG AGO

by *F Levien*  
*Author of "Maggie's Pictures" etc.*



MARCUS WARD & Co. LONDON,  
& ROYAL ULSTER WORKS, BELFAST.



THE BROTHERS  
OR  
TALES OF LONG AGO

BY  
F. LEVIEN  
AUTHOR OF "MAGGIE'S PICTURES," ETC.



London:  
MARCUS WARD & CO., 67, 68, CHANDOS STREET  
AND ROYAL ULSTER WORKS, BELFAST

1877





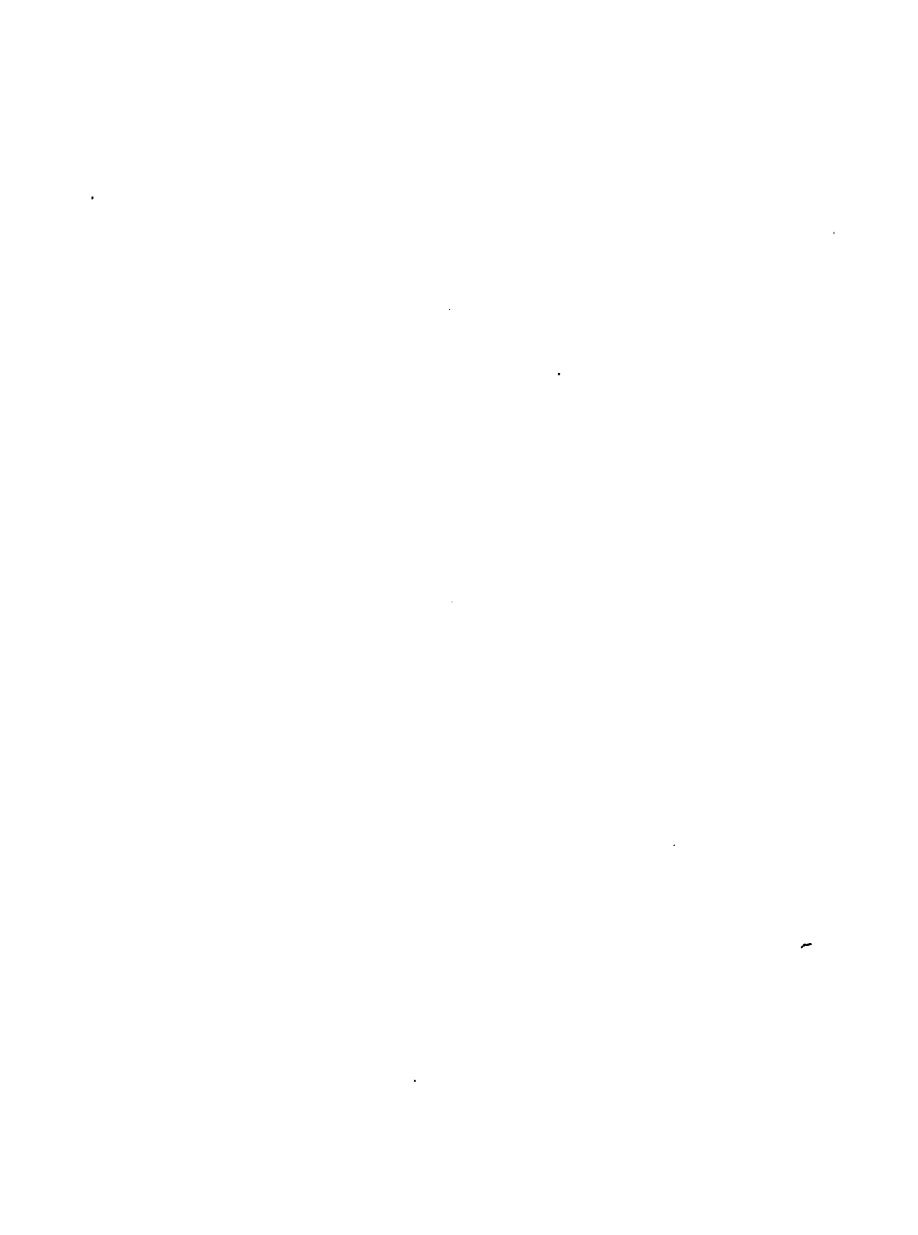
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## THE BROTHERS.

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### CHAP. I.—THE CONTRAST.

**J**OHAN and Stephen Wright stood side by side, looking at each other. Nobody would have taken them for brothers; Valentine and Orson in the fairy tale were not more unlike, and perhaps that is what these boys were thinking as they stood looking into each other's face. They felt shy and strange, for they could not remember ever having met before; and they were silent, not knowing how to begin speaking. Their meeting had taken place at a railway station—not exactly the place for two people to stand still and think and look at each other. And so the boys began to find out, when two trucks, a porter, and half-

a-dozen passengers had run up against them in turns.

"Is that your box, Stephen?" John asked at last, and Stephen nodded.

"Then we had better take it away," said the other. "There's the carrier outside; he'll take it down to aunt's for you."

John was nine years old and Stephen eight, both tall strong boys for their age; and the box was small enough; they found no difficulty in carrying it through the station to the cart, which was standing outside in the little country road, under the trees.

"I've met my brother, Mr. Brown," John said to the carrier. "And here's his box, if you'll be kind enough to take it to aunt's."

The carrier—a stout countryman, with big blue eyes—stared with all his might at Stephen.

"What! is he your brother?" he asked, surprised; for John's rosy cheeks and blue eyes and rings of yellow hair formed the strangest contrast to his brother's face, which was dark as a gipsy's. Still more unlike was John's neat look to Stephen's neglected appearance and shabby dress; John's springing step to Stephen's slouching tread; John's frank gaze to Stephen's timid, furtive glances.

John crimsoned as the carrier spoke, and took hold of Stephen's hand.

"Yes," he cried stoutly. "He is my brother, and he is coming to live with aunt and me now."

Stephen stood hanging his head and taking no notice.

"Well, to be sure!" said Mr. Brown, and he drove off without any more words, looking back, however, more than once at the boys, who were walking soberly along the road, until a turning was passed and he lost sight of them.

By-and-by he came to a pretty little farmhouse like a nest among the trees, just then unfolding their new spring leaves. Here he stopped and lifted out Stephen's box, while a woman in a widow's dress, with a sweet, sad face, came hastily down the little garden path and opened the gate to him.

"Has my nephew come, Mr. Brown?" she asked eagerly.

"That he has, Mrs. Baynes; and a fine rough one he looks—not a bit like your Johnnie."

"Poor little fellow! he has been brought up very differently," she answered. "They were left orphans when they were quite little things. I took Johnnie, but poor Stephen

went to some rough relations of his father in a mining district, where I fear he has not been kindly treated. Often enough I have fretted to have both my dear sister's children with me, especially as I had none of my own, but my dear husband was afraid of the charge. Now that I am alone, it's different."

Her voice failed her a little, and she helped Mr. Brown to carry in the box without more words.

"The boys are not far behind me, Mrs. Baynes," said the carrier, as he drove away. She smiled and nodded as she went back to the gate and stood for some time watching, her eyes shaded with her hand.

At length the two little figures were to be seen coming quietly along under the trees. As Johnnie caught sight of her, he took hold of his brother's hand and set off running; but Stephen pulled his hand away, and let him run on alone.

"Here he is, auntie!" cried John triumphantly. "But I think he's tired; he won't speak."

"Hush!" Mrs. Baynes said; and she came out into the road and walked a few steps to meet her nephew.

"Dear Stephen, I am so glad to see you,"

she said gently, and put her arm round him and kissed him.

He only hung his head, making no reply ; and his aunt, holding his hand, led him into the house.

"I expect you have been a long time on your journey, my dear," she said.

"Yes."

"And you must be very tired and hungry. Johnnie shall take you to your bedroom to wash your hands and face, and then we will have some tea."

"Come along, Stephen ; you've to sleep with me, you know ; and we have a jolly room, looking over the hay-field."

Still no answer ; and John ran upstairs, and waited at the top, while Stephen slowly followed him.

A bullfinch was whistling in his cage ; soft spring air was coming in ; and the sunshine, that had got too low in the sky to look in at the window, might still be seen sparkling through the trees. The room was very neat and pretty too, and John looked for some sign of pleasure from his brother at finding himself in such a pleasant place. But Stephen said nothing, and neither smiled nor took any notice.

"Isn't he a beauty?" said Johnnie, pointing to the bird. "I've had him these two years, and he's as tame as a dog. When I let him out of the cage he'll follow me all round the room."

Then he waited in vain for an answer.

"Don't you like birds, Stephen?"

"I don't know."

The voice certainly sounded sulky, but Johnnie felt sure he was only tired, and hastened to pour him out some water, and to suggest the preparations for tea. Stephen silently obeyed, and never said another word till he was seated in Mrs. Baynes' comfortable kitchen, with his tea before him. He seemed very hungry, said "Yes, please," to everything his aunt and brother offered him, and ate it up quickly.

Afterwards he seemed so sleepy that his aunt sent him at once to bed, Johnnie going too, "for company's sake," he said.

Stephen was asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow; but his poor brother was awake a long time, thinking over a circumstance which distressed him very much. Stephen had got into bed without saying any prayers!

The bright sunshine woke Johnnie very

early next morning ; they were always early risers at the farm, having a good deal to attend to before breakfast ; but he would not wake his brother, who was still sleeping soundly, and presently ran downstairs and out to his work, whistling like one of the blackbirds that were about.

Mrs. Baynes was already up, and busy with a woman who came in to help her with her dairy-work ; and John had no opportunity, even if he had the wish, to tell her of his trouble last night. About seven o'clock he ran up to waken Stephen, and tell him that breakfast would be ready in half-an-hour.

"Yes," said Stephen, and rose slowly and sleepily.

"I wonder when he will seem happy and talk," thought Johnnie to himself, as he handily set out the breakfast things and made the room ready for their morning meal.

He repeated his wonder to his aunt, who came in just then with a jug of new milk in her hand.

"Poor Stephen ! He has been unhappy and frightened, I believe ; he will be all right by-and-by, if you are good to him."

"Will he come to school with me this morning, aunt ?"



"Not just yet, while he seems so strange, and has not anything very tidy to go in. There's your last year's things, that you've grown out of; I must have them done up for him."

So John went off to school by himself that day; and when Stephen was told he might amuse himself as he pleased, he went out into the garden, and stood leaning over the gate. He looked so dull that by-and-by his aunt called him and asked him to help her with her flowers. She was a great gardener, and she talked away pleasantly to the boy, explaining her work to him, and telling him the names of the plants. Stephen seemed pleased, though he hardly said anything; and the morning was passing pleasantly enough, when poor Stephen managed to upset a fine geranium in a pot. It was a beautiful flower, and had only been set out for a little while to enjoy the sunshine; and now it was snapped right in two, and the blossoms fell like a heavy head upon the ground!

Mrs. Baynes was fond of her flowers, but she was much more distressed at the effect of the accident upon Stephen than upon the geranium. For the poor child had shrank back with such a look of terror, and put up

his arms as if expecting a blow. The movement, the expression of his face, told a sad tale of what his childish experiences had been.

"Never mind," she said, putting her arm round him tenderly; "it was only an accident. Let us pick up the blossoms, Stephen, and put them in water; they'll last a long time so, and make the room quite gay."

He looked very much astonished, but followed her into the house, and watched her putting the flowers in water with the greatest interest.

After that morning he followed his aunt everywhere, watching all her work, and smiling silently whenever she found some little business for him to do.

She soon found that Stephen had a true and earnest nature, and that he had at least learned a horror of falsehood and dishonesty. For the rest he was sadly untaught, though very anxious to learn. He seemed delighted to repeat the easy prayers she taught him, and listened eagerly when she spoke to him about our Saviour, and how we ought to love and serve Him.

So matters went on very quietly all the week, till Sunday morning came, and Ste-

phen, tidy and clean, looked far more like Johnnie's brother than when he first came. However, he was very silent still, and only coloured when Mrs. Baynes said at breakfast, "Stephen will begin going to Sunday school to-day."

John had ceased to expect answers from his brother, so he talked on describing the school, and trying to cheer Stephen up and make him laugh, but it was all in vain.

Mrs. Baynes walked with them to the gate when school-time approached, and sighed as she felt the tight clasp of Stephen on her hand, as if he feared to let her go.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said, kissing him when they reached the end of the garden. "Be a good boy."

Then she was obliged to pull away her hand, and John led his brother off; she watched them for a while along the road, and then went indoors and sat down to read. How pleasant the stillness was, after her week's work!

Outside, only the birds' songs and the wind among the trees moving ever so softly; within, the clock ticking, the purring of the cat. This was all she heard. She opened her Bible at some words she loved.

"There remaineth therefore a rest unto the people of God."

That was indeed a verse for Sunday, she thought, as she bent over her Bible. It was a large, handsome book, with pictures in it, just such beautiful pictures as you see here. Mrs. Baynes had many loving recollections belonging to that book. How often her husband had read to her from it! How often she had shown Johnnie the pictures on quiet Sunday afternoons, and taught him Bible lessons from them!

I think she had lost herself in some such remembrances, when she was suddenly roused by hasty footsteps; the door was pushed open hurriedly, and Stephen ran in. He was sobbing as if his heart would break; and Mrs. Baynes, in some alarm, took him on her lap and begged him to tell her what was the matter.

"I won't go to school any more!" he gasped. "I won't go! I won't go!"

"Why, Stephen? What has happened?"

Stephen only sobbed; but presently he put his arms round her neck and began to implore her—

"Don't send me there again! don't send me!"

"But tell me why, dear child! Johnnie always likes going."

"Johnnie! He can read; I can't. He can write; I can't. He knows all about what they ask at the school, and I don't. And they put me in among the little ones; and they laughed at me. And I heard some of the others whisper, "Fancy Johnnie Wright's brother being such a dunce! He's not a bit like Johnnie," they said; "and then——" And coming to the bitterest part of his story, the child's voice failed altogether.

Mrs. Baynes kissed him, and told him not to mind.

"Is that all?" she asked.

"Oh no! oh no!"

"What else did they say? I am afraid they are very naughty boys."

"They said that—that Johnnie was ashamed of his brother."

"Then you know they said what is not true. Johnnie ashamed of his brother! If he was ashamed of his brother, I am sure I should be ashamed of him."

And then she soothed and petted him as if he had been a baby. Poor child! He remembered no such caresses in his earlier years; his memory could recall little but hard

blows and harder words ; and just now the love seemed too much for him, and made it all the harder to stop crying.

Indeed the church bells were ringing before Stephen could be persuaded to hold up his head, and he had only time to wash his face and make himself presentable before his aunt took him with her to church.

There all was strange ; he could not remember ever going to church before, and the service was quite incomprehensible to him. But his morning's trouble seemed to have loosed his tongue ; he asked various questions as he went home, and showed his aunt how much she would have to teach him.

Then when Johnnie begged to know what had made him run away from school, Stephen found words to tell him all about it.

Johnnie crimsoned.

"What a shame !" he cried in great wrath. "You show me to-morrow who said it, and see if I won't knock him down for his impudence."

"Johnnie !" cried his aunt so severely that Stephen quite started.

"I beg your pardon, aunt ; but really he deserves it."

"Deserves ! Oh, Johnnie, I hope we shall

none of us get all we deserve. That would be dreadful!"

Johnnie said no more, and they sat down to dinner in silence.

"And you are not coming to school this afternoon?" John asked of his brother, as two o'clock approached.

Stephen looked beseechingly at his aunt.

"You had better make his excuses this afternoon, Johnnie. He is coming to school to me."

The boys laughed.

"And remember, Johnnie, I shall be seriously displeased if you make any quarrels out of this matter."

John's face looked a little gloomy as he walked away, but Mrs. Baynes took no notice; and as soon as she had finished "washing up the dinner things," she took out her big Bible again, and invited Stephen to come and look at the pictures.





## CHAP. II.—THE BEGINNING.

"THEY are nice pictures," said Stephen.  
"But I don't know what they mean."

"They are pictures belonging to the story of the world, the true story, as we find it in the Bible. And I want you to learn what they mean very much. Will you listen and try to remember, if I tell you?"

Stephen was quite ready to promise that he would ; he turned back to the first picture, and fixed his eyes upon it as his aunt began.

"You can tell me, Stephen, who is the Maker of all things in heaven and earth?"

"You told me that God Almighty made us."

"Yes. Our Father in heaven, the great and merciful God, whom we cannot see, but who always sees us, called us into being, as well as the earth, the trees, the flowers, the sun and stars, and all creatures that you see. We read in the Bible that 'in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' And at



first the earth was dark and empty, with the waves of the sea roaring all over it, until God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light.' Then God caused the sea to gather together in its place, and let the dry land appear; and when there was dry land for the plants to grow upon, God made them grow, and cover the earth with grass and trees. And He made the sun, the moon, and the stars. Afterwards He caused live things to come into the world—fishes in the sea and birds in the air; then other animals. At last, when all the earth was ready for a man to live in, God made a man to live there. We read, 'And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; so man became a living soul.' "

"Had the first man a home to live in?"

"We read that God placed him in a garden—a beautiful place, full of lovely trees and fruits and flowers, and with a great bright river flowing through it to water the garden; and all kinds of gentle and pretty animals and birds were there; it was a happy place."

"And did the man have it for his own?"

"Yes, it was all his own—the Lord God gave it to him; all the trees and the animals

were to be his. The first man, Adam, might walk about the garden, and have everything for himself."

"He must have been very happy."

"Yes; but he wanted something else. Can you guess what it was? What would you have wished for in his place, I wonder?"

Stephen thought of the lovely garden, the shining river, and the birds with their pleasant song.

"I should not have wanted anything," he said, "except for you and Johnnie to come and be in my garden with me."

"And that is what Adam found; he was very lonely in his beautiful garden—he wanted a friend. Man is not meant to be happy all alone; we can only be really happy when we have some one near us to share our happiness with. It leaves off being real happiness as soon as we get selfish, and want it all to ourselves. So as Adam could not be happy all by himself, the Lord God made a woman, called Eve, who was to be Adam's wife, and live with him in the garden. Adam was asleep when the Lord God made Eve; but we can fancy how pleased he felt when he woke up and saw her coming towards him under the trees. And how pleased she must

have been to find herself with Adam in that lovely place.

"There were all manner of beautiful things for her to see, as I told you ; pleasant shady trees, sweet and gay flowers, roses and lilies perhaps ; all sorts of fruit trees, orange trees with their dark leaves and golden fruit, vines with their clusters of purple grapes. The air was full of sweet sounds as the song-birds sang to their mates ; beautiful animals bounded across the soft grass, or drank of the clear water of the streams which flowed murmuring through the garden."

"She must have been pleased," said Stephen.

"Yes ; altogether it was the most beautiful place you can imagine. But you must not think that Adam and Eve had nothing else to do than to enjoy all those beautiful things. In some respects they were like grown-up people, but in other ways they were more like children. They had a man's and a woman's power of learning, but they had to learn like children. Yes ; God had put them into that beautiful garden that they might *learn*. Perhaps you will ask what sort of things they had to learn.

"I fancy they were intended to learn all

about the trees and flowers, the birds and beasts that were about them."

"And how would they learn all that?"

"Well, by observation—by using their eyes and other senses.

"But I think God intended them to learn much more important things than those. They were not only God's creatures, they were God's children; so it was necessary for them to learn about their Father in heaven."

"And how could they learn that?"

"Perhaps God sent some of His holy angels to talk with them."

"What were they?" Stephen asked.

"This man and woman were not the first creatures the Lord God had made to love and serve Him. He had some other servants (who did not live in this world), called His 'angels'—that means 'messengers.' They were something like men, the Bible says; but they could fly, and do other things that men cannot do, because men are meant to serve God in one way and the angels in another. Perhaps, as I said, some of these holy messengers were sent to talk to Adam and Eve. But I rather think, from what the Bible says, that they had a higher and better teacher than even the angels.

"Who could so well teach them about the Father as the Son of God, whose good pleasure it has always been to reveal the Father to us?"

"But you cannot so well understand that yet; we will go on to the great lesson which Adam and Eve would have to learn about that heavenly Father, and of the duty they owed to Him. This was the great lesson we all have to learn, the lesson which God has placed us on this earth to learn, the great lesson of obedience. You know what that means?"

"Doing what we are told to do," Stephen answered.

"Yes; and the remembrance of that great lesson brings us to a very difficult and very sad part of this story. I have told you that Adam and Eve had to *learn*—above all, that they had to learn obedience. Now they could only learn obedience by having some rule to obey, and by being able to disobey it if they wanted to do so. Of course the Almighty God could have made of them creatures who could not disobey if they had tried, or who could never have felt a wish to disobey Him. But such obedience as that—forced obedience, that they could not help—

would not have been pleasing to God. He had given them all good things ; and, best of all, He gave them the power of pleasing Him by obeying Him, if they liked. He left their choice free ; they could obey if they liked, they could disobey if they liked. That is the only way in which their obedience could really show that they loved God and wanted to serve Him ; therefore it was the only way in which their obedience could be pleasing to Him. And so it is with us ; God wishes us to serve Him because we love Him and wish to serve Him, not because we must. It is so with ourselves, in a way. I should not care for you to do things for me only because you could not help it. If I thought you *liked* to do them, then I should be pleased.

“So you see there was no help for it. If man had to learn to please God by his obedience, he must run the risk of disobedience. And there must be some trial to show whether he would obey or not. It mattered very little what the trial was, so that it was a trial ; and God appointed one for Adam and Eve that was suited to their way of life and the place in which they lived.

“It was this. In the beautiful garden there was a tree, which was called the Tree of

Knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of this tree God strictly forbade them to eat. They might take the fruit of every tree but this one, but of this the Lord God told them that in the day they ate of it they should die. Here was their trial. This would show what was in their hearts, whether they would obey God or no. But this was not the whole of their trial. This was only the shell, as it were, of their trial ; the kernel of it was very different, and far more serious. However beautiful the tree might be, however tempting was its fruit, its merely being there in the midst of the garden was not a sufficiently searching test of obedience. The tree could not speak and ask them to take of its fruit, and the very idea of doing so might never strike them.

“Now in order that Adam and Eve should reach their highest good—that is, pleasing God by choosing to obey Him—it was needful for some one to put the idea of taking the forbidden fruit into their head, and that they should refuse to disobey when they were free to choose their own course. This test was at hand.

“There was an enemy preparing to try and lead them wrong ; and perhaps, if you think

over what I have said, you will see a little why he was allowed by God to do it. There is a wicked angel who has rebelled against God, and who is always striving to displease Him as much as the holy angels try to serve Him; and this wicked angel made his way into the beautiful garden to tempt Adam and Eve to rebel against God, even as he had done.

"In some way he contrived to speak to Eve without frightening her too much, and then he began to talk about the tree of knowledge, trying to make her believe that God was not good to her in keeping back from her this fruit, which the wicked angel said was best of all. It would do more for her than any other fruit, he told her, and that was why God had told her not to eat it, and that she should die if she did so. She would not die because of eating it, he said. Eve had never heard a lie before; but she knew enough of God's goodness and truth not to believe the wicked angel's words, if she had thought properly about it all.

"But instead of turning away from the tree and the voice of the tempter, to remember the goodness and wisdom of God, and assure herself that it must be right to obey Him, she



let her eyes rest upon the tempting fruit, and listened to the wicked words, till she began to long to disobey. She saw that the fruit was 'pleasant to the eye' and 'good for food,' and 'a tree to be desired to make one wise;' and at last she stretched out her hand and picked the fruit and ate of it, and then she gave some to her husband, and he ate of it also.

"This beginning of sin in the world is what we call 'The Fall of Man,' because Adam and Eve fell from a state in which they knew no harm, and became sinners, who must know sorrow and die. Though they did not die at once, though the Lord gave them time to repent, yet they knew now death was coming. This is partly what the words mean—'Thou shalt die;' and partly they refer to sin itself, which is called in the Bible 'death,' because it kills goodness in the soul; it is, to use a hard word for it, 'spiritual death.'

"This was the Fall; they had disobeyed, and now they knew how to be wicked, while before they had only known goodness. Everything was changed to them; they began to feel unhappy and frightened for the first time. The evening came, and then they heard the voice of the Lord God calling to them, and

they were afraid, and hid themselves among the trees of the garden.

"But we cannot hide from God ; He sees us always, and knows all we do, all we think, every moment of our lives. He saw them among the trees, as He had seen them all day long, and he called to Adam, 'Where art thou?' And Adam said, 'I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid.' And the Lord God asked him what he had done.

"'Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?'

"Then Adam, like every one who does wrong, felt inclined to excuse himself and throw the blame upon somebody else, and he answered—

"'The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.'

"And the Lord God asked Eve—

"'What is this that thou hast done?'

"And Eve had her excuse too ; she said it was the bad angel who had persuaded her to take the fruit.

"But of what use were excuses? They had done the wrong ; they were no longer sinless creatures ; and therefore they could no longer be allowed to stay in the garden of

Eden. The Lord God banished them from their beautiful home; they were driven forth by an angel into the great wide world."

"How unhappy they must have been," Stephen said.

"They must indeed, especially when they came to know that their children, and all mankind who came after them, would follow their bad example, and be sinners too. But the Lord God was merciful to them, and did not leave them without hope. He promised (though in words that they could not quite understand then) that mankind should have a Deliverer, who should some day help them out of their sad state of sin, and make them good and happy again. This Deliverer was our Saviour, about whom I have been telling you lately; the Son of God, who became man to help us.

‘There was no other good enough  
To pay the price of sin;  
He only could unlock the gate  
Of heaven and let us in.’

You know I have told you how He died to save us all; He died for all mankind—for Adam and Eve, and all who lived before He came into this world, as much as for us who live after.





“We must never read this sad story without thinking of Him who is called in the Bible the Second Adam, because He showed us in His perfect life all that the first Adam should have been, and was not. He fulfilled exactly all that God meant man to be ; He was perfect in obedience ; He overcame the temptations of the bad angel.

‘He died that we might be forgiven ;  
He died to make us good ;  
That we might go at last to heaven,  
Saved by His precious blood.’

If we will but trust in Him, and do His will, He will give us back more than all that Adam lost. He will bring us to a better paradise, and make us happy there for ever.”





### CHAP. III.—JOHN'S TROUBLES.

STEPHEN was sitting thinking over what he had heard, and looking at the Bible pictures, when the click of the garden gate disturbed him, and he looked up to see his brother appearing ; not, as usual, with a light step and laughing face ; indeed he looked so gloomy that Stephen ran to him and asked what was the matter.

It was an improvement that the younger brother could look up at him frankly now, and speak easily ; that day's trouble and sympathy seemed suddenly to have carried him over the barriers of shyness and restraint. Yesterday, Johnnie would have been full of delight at his brother's show of friendship ; but now his brow did not clear—no smile came to his lips. He only put his arm round Stephen, and began to walk up and down the garden with him.

"What is the matter, Johnnie ?"

The other did not answer.

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"Is anything the matter?"

"Yes; I'm in a scrape—such a scrape as I never was in before at school;" and Johnnie looked still more put out.

"Tell me about it, do!"

"It's no good telling. But I've been treated unjustly; and I don't care what they say. If they don't treat me fairly, I won't behave myself, and so I tell them."

John's voice had a sound of rebellion in it, and his eyes flashed; Stephen looked very much awe-struck, but he made no answer, for at the moment Mrs. Baynes had come up to them, and was looking surprised and distressed at John's loud voice and excited face.

"My dear boy, you have not been getting into trouble at school?"

"Yes, I have," he said, rather sullenly.

"But what was it? I am sure you did not wish to give your teacher trouble, Johnnie."

"Mr. Moore said he should come and tell you all about it," said John bitterly.

Mr. Moore was the rector of the parish, and the idea that he should come to complain of her boy, whom she loved to think one of the pattern boys at the school, quite frightened Mrs. Baynes.



"Oh, Johnnie! surely Mr. Moore is not displeased with you?"

"He said he was, aunt."

"But do tell me what it is all about; you do not know how anxious and unhappy you are making me."

"They were unjust to me," said Johnnie sturdily; and then, catching sight of a figure coming along the road, he exclaimed, "There now! there's Mr. Moore. He'll tell you;" and, turning from them hastily, he ran into the house. Stephen followed him, and Mrs. Baynes turned to meet a kind-faced old gentleman who entered the garden a moment afterwards and shook hands with her in friendly fashion.

"I do hope, sir," she began anxiously, "that my Johnnie has not been giving you trouble. He's not like himself this afternoon."

"Well, so I thought. I never remember hearing a complaint of John before. But this afternoon his teacher come to me quite disturbed about him. 'I told him to look over the hymn-book with Ned Rice,' he said. 'And some sort of a whisper passed between them, and John got into such a rage he knocked Ned off the form, threw down the book, and all I can say will not make him pick it up

again, or go on with his lesson.' So I had to go and see what I could do, Mrs. Baynes. I desired John myself to pick up the book and go on with his lesson; but finding him stubborn, I would not contend with him, but put him at the bottom of the class, in disgrace. After school I spoke to him privately, and tried to persuade him to beg his teacher's pardon; but he was as obstinate as possible. You must mind you do not spoil him, Mrs. Baynes; he has no father to correct him. If I were you I would send him off to bed at once, to show him you are displeased."

"But perhaps, sir, Ned teased him. His brother has been much neglected, and the other boys mocked at him this morning, and Johnnie could not bear that."

"My dear Mrs. Baynes, could a silly speech from a school-fellow justify all that display of temper and disobedience to his teacher and myself? Forgive me if I say, do not let your kind heart blind your good sense, for I know you have the best of good sense of your own. Do not let it be misled into spoiling the boy. He is a very nice boy, but all children may be spoiled."

"I will do my best, sir, indeed," she answered so humbly and earnestly that Mr.

Moore's wish to scold her passed away, and he only talked a little while pleasantly about her flowers, and then bade her good-bye.

Mrs. Baynes walked slowly into the house ; called Stephen downstairs, and asked him to get out the tea things ; then went up to John, who had taken refuge in his own room.

He was sitting on the edge of his bed looking down gloomily, and he did not stir as she came in, nor even when she sat down beside him and put her hand on his shoulder.

"My dear child, what is it all about ? Did Ned Rice say anything about Stephen ?"

"He'd made a picture of him, with a fool's cap on, in his hymn-book, and I wasn't going to look over it with him after that. I just shoved him one way and the book the other. And they never asked what I did it for, but ordered me to pick it up and go on. I wasn't going to pick up Ned's old book for him, I know. They might have asked me my reasons ; but if they like to be unfair, I'm not going to behave myself."

Mrs. Baynes sat silent for a few moments ; then she said suddenly—

"How long is it that you have been to Sunday school, Johnnie ?"

"These four or five years—since I was ever so small."

"And Mr. Mason has been so kind to you all the time before you got into his class. How often he has played with you and noticed you. I remember his letting you ride home on his shoulder once, and then another time his bringing you that big coloured ball you used to be so proud of. And when you had the fever a year ago, how he used to come and see you. When you were getting better, it was always, 'When is Mr. Mason coming again?' and you had a drawer full of the pictures he brought you. And you had the Bible he gave you at Christmas with you this afternoon. How soon all that kindness is forgotten, because one day he did not understand how another boy had put you in a passion!"

John got very red, but said nothing.

"And Mr. Moore! I should have thought there was no friend you could respect like him, who was so good to us when your dear uncle was dying, who has been so kind to you all your life. Oh, Johnnie! is it possible that you can have unkind, ungrateful feelings to him?"

"I don't know," returned Johnnie, in a rather unsteady voice,

"My dear child, think about it, try to know. I cannot help hoping you do not feel ungrateful; but indeed what you did was ungrateful—disrespectful too. If you think it over, I am sure you will be ashamed of yourself, and scold yourself, which will be far more useful than my scolding you."

Johnnie felt ashamed enough already, and sorry enough too; it seemed "babyish" to cry, he thought; but when he was left alone he could help it no longer, the tears would have their way. Yes, he had behaved very badly. He could feel it now that the wave of passion had retreated and left the truth bare.

He was very miserable for perhaps half-an-hour; that was a long time for Johnnie to be unhappy; his troubles generally cleared away in half that time. He was only beginning to recover himself when Stephen came in softly and timidly. He had some vague idea that his brother's trouble was connected with himself; but he dared not ask, and the idea only made him shy.

"Won't you have your tea, Johnnie?" he said with an effort.

Johnnie jumped up and ran to wash his face.

"I want to go out again," he said, trying to

steady his voice. "It was too bad of me this afternoon, and I'll just go and say so to Mr. Mason, and to Mr. Moore too."

Stephen's heart sank. What dreadful thing was this that his brother was going to do? He trembled to think of it.

But Johnnie rushed downstairs as if his spirits had returned to him, and darted into the kitchen to his aunt.

"I am very sorry," he said eagerly. "I want to go and tell them."

Mrs. Baynes quite understood what he meant, and smiled with pleasure as she answered, "You are right, my boy;" but there was a depth of satisfaction in her tone that made Stephen glad of his brother's decision, terrible as it appeared to him. Johnnie was out of the house and speeding away on his errand before any more could be said, though as he came near the Rectory his pace slackened a little, and a certain shyness made his cheeks burn again. But he was fortunate in the moment of his arrival, for the rector was walking in his garden, and the very Mr. Mason himself at his side.

They were talking very earnestly, and did not notice the approaching footsteps till John stood close beside them; then they turned

and perceived the little fellow, looking up with a flushed face and a very much ashamed expression.

"Well, Johnnie, have you come to your senses?" asked Mr. Moore quite kindly.

"I'm very sorry, sir. If you'll try me again, I shall behave better, I hope. I'm very sorry, sir." This second apology was addressed to Mr. Mason.

"That is well," said Mr. Moore. "You have been a very good boy in general, Johnnie, and I hope you mean to try for the future to keep up that character. I've no doubt your teacher will be quite willing to overlook what happened to-day."

Mr. Mason signified his willingness, and then, perhaps pitying his pupil's confusion, said they must not keep the rector any longer now; it would soon be church-time, and so went off with the boy. They were great friends really, and Mr. Mason had heard the whole story before they reached Mrs. Baynes' gate.

"I don't wonder that it tried your temper, Johnnie," he said kindly. "I wish I had seen it at the time."

They shook hands and parted better friends than ever

How could Johnnie look so bright after all that trouble? Stephen wondered, as the three went off very quietly to church together. He felt unhappy for his brother and for himself; he could not forget what he had suffered that morning.

But people who cannot get over their troubles quickly perhaps learn the more from them; so Stephen had some advantage over his brother.

It was a lovely evening when they came out of church; the sun had set, but had left a great deal of light behind him in the sky—a soft, low light that made everything look beautiful.

It had not been a very happy day, Stephen thought; but the evening seemed so pleasant and still, as if it would make up for all that had gone wrong. He would have felt almost happy again, as the three walked along together, but for the thought of to-morrow.

Had not his aunt said that he must begin going to day-school to-morrow? And how dreadful that would be, if the Sunday-school had been so bad!

Stephen's dreams that night were disturbed with visions of troubles in school; sometimes the boys were teasing, sometimes the rector



was scolding him for being so great a dunce ; so that it was a relief to wake and find the morning had come, and that Johnnie was already up and whistling gaily.

Only, as he recollected in a moment, the real troubles were coming now, and the thought made him sink back on his pillow with a deep sigh.

"What's the matter?" said Johnnie, stopping suddenly in the middle of "Rule, Britannia."

"Johnnie," Stephen began, then he stopped again, but brought out at last—"I'm afraid of going to school."

"Afraid! Why, our master, Mr. Willis, is as kind as can be. You needn't be afraid."

"It's—it's—I wouldn't mind the master beating me. I've been beaten often enough."

Johnnie stared.

"Mr. Willis won't beat you, Stephen."

"No; it's the boys I'm afraid of."

"Oh, they daren't say a word in school when Mr. Willis is there. It's different on Sundays; they take liberties then."

"Are they so frightened for Mr. Willis, then?"

"Frightened! No; but he makes them afraid of doing anything wrong."

A little consoled by these assurances, Stephen found spirit to rise and follow Johnnie out of doors, to help in his various tasks. But he was very silent and sober again, and so he showed himself at breakfast, and during their walk to school.

"Oh, Johnnie!" he said in a whisper as they reached it, "how I wish I was not going in!"

Johnnie laughed, and told him not to mind. The bell was ringing loudly; a number of boys were running in; the brothers joined them; and what with the clatter of feet, the buzz of voices, and the clanging of the bell, Stephen felt quite bewildered, but his brother pulled him by the sleeve, and led him up the school. "There's Mr. Willis," whispered Johnnie, and Stephen scarcely found courage to look up at a gentleman who was standing by a desk at the upper end of the room—a gentleman with a bald head and a beard, a kind, thoughtful face, with grave quick eyes that seemed to see every part of the room at once. This was Mr. Willis.

"This is my brother, sir," said Johnnie, presenting him.

"Your brother," the master returned, in a low, clear voice. "A younger brother, I suppose."

"Yes, sir ; and he has not been to school before, so he has to begin at the beginning."

"Well, every one must do that some time or other, I suppose. What is your name, my boy?"

"Stephen Wright, sir."

"You have not learned to read yet, Stephen?"

It was not nearly so difficult to say "No" as Stephen had feared ; somehow the master did not seem at all as if he were going to be shocked.

"No? Then you shall begin this morning. Be very attentive. Come this way ;" and Stephen found himself placed at the bottom of a form full of very little boys ; but nobody seemed to notice him, or made any remark.

The big bell stopped ringing at the moment the master walked to his desk and touched a little bell which stood there. It was the signal that all noise should cease ; at the sound every voice was hushed, every boy sat down quietly in his own place. The whole school became still as a frozen river.

"Stand !" All the boys stood up as straight as soldiers and sang a hymn ; afterwards came some prayers ; then all set to work.

Pupil teachers began to instruct the younger

classes ; but Mr. Willis' eyes seemed on every one at the slightest disturbance ; his low "hush" was enough to bring back perfect order.

Indeed it was soon easy for even Stephen to see how difficult it would be to disobey the gentle determination of the master's manner, or to elude his all-seeing observation.

But there was the young pupil teacher pointing out the letters on the board, and making the children repeat them after him. Stephen set to work with all his might to learn the looks of these strange black things, which meant so much.

How hard it seemed at first ! But there were these little, tiny children learning them, and he would—he would !

Mr. Willis noticed the eager earnestness of Stephen's dark eyes, and said to Johnnie when school was over—

"You might try and get your brother on at home. I am sure he wants to learn."

"Yes, I will, sir, thank you, if he likes."

And the boys went out with the stream.

"There now ! You did not mind it much, did you ?" asked Johnnie, quite triumphantly, as he met his brother's smile.

"No, it was not half so bad as I thought ; and Mr. Willis does seem kind."

"Ah! and he is kind too," said Johnnie.

"But what is he like when he's angry?" said Stephen. "I suppose, if they will not behave themselves, he is angry sometimes?"

"Yes. I'm sure I hope, Stephen, he will never be angry with us. It's enough to frighten you; he's so quiet, and yet his voice is like thunder; and he looks—but I hope you'll not see it, Stephen; that's all."

Certainly Stephen hoped so too.





#### CHAP. IV.—THE STORY OF THE RAINBOW.

STEPHEN had made up his mind that he would soon cease to be a dunce ; when afternoon school was over, Johnnie must find a little time to teach him the letters. In the evening, when his aunt was sitting at her needlework, he begged her to let him have the Bible with the pictures again, and to tell him another story out of it.

“I was thinking yesterday I never should learn anything,” he said. “But to-day seems like beginning again ; and I hope I shall learn as much as Johnnie some day.”

“That beginning again every new day that comes is a great blessing to us,” said his aunt. “We go to bed at night tired, or disappointed, or sorry because the day has gone by and we seem not to have done all we meant in it ; then we have a good rest, and we wake up and find everything new again—a new day to work in and hope in—new

strength and spirits to begin all over again, just as if we were fresh labourers come to a piece of work of which others had got tired out. We ought to thank God for our new beginnings every morning."

"It was a big 'new beginning' my coming here," said Stephen gravely; and in his own heart he said to himself, "I am sure I ought to thank God for that."

"It is about the great 'new beginning' of the world that I was going to tell you to-night, Stephen," his aunt went on. "You know you heard about the first beginning of all yesterday."

"Yes—and how soon people left off being good."

"After those days they seem to have gone on getting worse, instead of better; the more men there were living together, the more harm was done, till there was no peace in the world because of their violence and of their wickedness; and at last they grew to be so dreadfully bad that the Lord God saw that it was better they should not live on the earth any more, for the longer they lived the worse they grew; it was better that their bodies should return to the earth, and their souls should be called to God.

“ But in the midst of all those wicked people there lived one good man, whose name was Noah. The Lord God saw that, in spite of all the dreadful things that were going on around him, Noah lived a good, quiet life, and did all he could to serve God, and teach his sons to be good men. He had three sons, whose names were Shem, Ham, and Japhet. Now in those days people used to live for a very great number of years, and when Noah was more than four hundred years old, it pleased the Lord God to speak to him, and tell him that an end was coming to all the terrible wickedness that was filling the earth. Every one was going on boldly with his bad deeds, just as if there was no one to punish them ; but all the time the end was coming nearer and nearer. And the Lord God said to Noah that a great danger was hanging over all the world, and that he was to begin at once and build for himself a great ship, called an ‘ark ;’ it was rather more like a house than a ship perhaps, but it was all to be made of wood, that it might float upon the waters. It was to have a window and a door, and to be three stories high ; and it was to be very large. ‘And,’ the Lord God said, ‘behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters



upon the earth to destroy all flesh wherein is the breath of life from under heaven, and everything that is in the earth shall die.'

"But Noah and his wife, and his sons and their wives, were to go into the ark and be safe; and they were to take two of every kind of animals into the ark too, to keep them alive; and birds as well, two of every kind."

"And that was why the ark had to be so big?" Stephen asked.

"That was the reason; and when Noah had heard the words of the Lord God, he set to work and began to build the ark directly."

"Did the people know that the flood was coming?"

"I believe that all the many years Noah was building the ark he kept on telling them why he was making it, and warning them of the danger that was coming upon them. But they would not heed him. Noah went on working and working; year by year the ark grew larger. Perhaps many came and watched his work; perhaps they laughed at him for taking so much trouble for nothing. At any rate, they did not believe in the dreadful flood that was coming, but went on with their business and their pleasure and their wickedness, until at last the ark was

finished, and Noah took into it all the creatures that the Lord God had told him to take, and then went in himself with his wife and family.

“Very likely the wicked men mocked the more at that, when they saw Noah and his family enter into their ship on dry land ; and a week went by, and nothing happened. And then, in the midst of the feasting and merriment and wickedness, came the terrible end of it all ; there came on a wonderful deluge of rain, and the sea rolled in great waves upon the land, farther and farther, till all the cities and fields and mountains were covered with water, and all living creatures that lived upon the land perished in the waves.

“But over the flood the ark went floating, quite safely, though it must have been terrible for those inside to hear the rush of waters above and the dashing of the sea below, and to know that underneath those waves a whole world lay buried.

“For forty days the rushing torrents of rain went on, never stopping day and night ; then that sound ceased, and all was still. There was a great silence outside the ark, for all voices were hushed in death, and everywhere spread a great endless sea. And for a

hundred and fifty days the ark floated upon the waters of the flood. Then the waters began to dry up again, and the tops of the mountains appeared first of all, looking like little islands in the great sea. And it was on the top of one of these mountains that the ark rested at last. Noah waited quietly for forty days more ; then he opened the window of the ark and looked out. No doubt he saw nothing but the mountain tops and the great sea ; but he thought he would try if there was any dry land near him, so he let out two of the birds he had brought with him into the ark—a raven and a dove. The birds flew about, and found no place to rest upon. The raven did not mind ; it kept flying about till the waters went down ; but the dove soon got tired, and went back to the ark, and Noah put out his hand and pulled her in again.

“Then he waited for another week, and after that let out the dove again ; and she flew about all day, and came back to him in the evening with an olive leaf in her beak. So then Noah knew that the waters must have gone down a great deal ; but he waited patiently another week, and then he sent out the dove again, and it never came back to him any more.”

"It must have been very lonely, out by itself in the world," said Stephen.

"Noah and his family and the other creatures soon came out afterwards. For when Noah saw that his bird did not come back, he lifted the covering from off the ark and looked out, and there was the land again, all fresh and green, and the great waves of water had rolled back to the sea. And the Lord God spoke to Noah again, and said to him, 'Go forth of the ark, thou and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee of all flesh, both of fowl and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth.'

"So Noah did as he was told, and he came out of the ark with his family and all his creatures, and so the world had a new beginning. Then the Lord God promised that there should never be another great flood to kill all living things. 'While the earth remaineth,' the Lord said, 'seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter shall not cease.' And the Lord blessed Noah and his sons, and said that all the world and all the creatures in it should be given them. They might kill the animals they needed for their food; but if any man shed

man's blood, by man should his blood be shed.

"And then the Lord God was so merciful that He gave Noah and his sons a sign that there should be no more floods to destroy the earth. This sign was the beautiful rainbow that we see in the clouds. When rain had fallen, and they began to be afraid, the sun would shine upon the clouds, and they should see the lovely coloured arch, and remember God's promise, and all His mercy and love."

"How glad they must have been to see it! And oh! how pleased they must have been to get out upon the land again after all that time in the ark!"

"Yes, indeed! And the sight of the rainbow might remind us often of Noah's long, patient waiting, till in God's good time he was allowed to begin his life again. The rainbow might preach us a little sermon every time it comes, and say, 'Be patient, and trust in God. He will keep you safely in the midst of troubles. You will not get good all at once, or wise all at once; you will have to wait as Noah waited till the waters went down, but in God's good time your patience shall have its reward. Begin again. Begin again.'"

"That is a nice easy sermon," said Stephen ;  
"and short too."

"You know the rainbow does not stay very long at a time," said his aunt, smiling. "But the shorter the sermon the easier it ought to be remembered, so I hope you will remember the rainbow's."

"I will try," said Stephen in a low voice ; and presently he asked, "Did Noah and his sons ever feel afraid of another flood after they had seen the rainbow?"

"I should think not ; but not very long after their days the message of the rainbow was forgotten. There were a great many people living in the world by that time, and as they were all descended from Noah's family, they all talked one language—not as we do now-a-days, each nation speaking its own kind of speech. Now these people began to be afraid that something dreadful would happen to them, in spite of the Lord's promise, and that they should be scattered all over the earth. So they agreed to build a city and a great tower, so high that the top of it should reach up to heaven.

"But no doubt it was wrong of the people to determine thus to show they did not trust in God, or remember what He had promised.

And when they had set to work to make their tower, and to build and to carry out their plan, the Lord God showed it to be His will that their buildings should never be completed.

"Instead of letting them go on speaking the same language, God caused them to begin to speak with different tongues, so that they might not understand each other; and this caused such a confusion that they gave up their plan altogether.

"They separated, and went some one way, some another; I suppose they divided themselves into parties speaking the same tongue. And in this way they came to be scattered all over the earth, as they had determined not to be.

"See, Stephen, their story only teaches some more of the same lesson we have had before—'Do not be in too great a hurry to arrange things for yourselves, and to get your own way. Have patience, and see what is God's will for you. Begin again. Begin again.'

"Once more the message of the rainbow."



#### CHAP. V.—PERPLEXITIES.

STEPHEN learned his letters quickly enough to surprise himself as well as his teacher; he had soon risen from the lowest place in the school. His eyes grew brighter and his tongue more ready; indeed he felt those days to be sunshiny outside and in. But an interruption was coming only too soon, and one morning, as they sat at breakfast, Johnnie exclaimed—

“Why, there’s the postman!”

This was quite an event, so few letters came to Mrs. Baynes’ house, and both boys rushed out to see what had come.

It was a letter for their aunt, and Johnnie darted back with it to her.

“A letter from Uncle John!” she said, examining the postmark.

The boys stood, looking up at her, surprised; they had never heard of “Uncle John” before.



"No, it's not from himself," went on Mrs. Baynes, as she read. "He got some one to write for him. He was too ill to write himself."

She finished the letter in silence, and then sat holding it in her lap, thinking and looking troubled. The boys gazed with a dozen questions in their eyes, till at last John could wait no longer.

"What is it, aunt? Who's ill? What's the matter?"

"My uncle, dear — your grandmother's brother—is very ill, and wants me to come and see him. He lives twenty miles off, and I was thinking how I could manage, and who could take care of you and the house and all if I went away for a few days."

"Must you go, aunt?" asked Stephen in rather an alarmed voice.

"I think so, my dear. Besides, I wish to go. Uncle John was always very kind to me, and I should like to go to him if he wants me. But you must be off to school now. We can talk about it more when you come back."

They went rather reluctantly, talking over what they should do with their aunt away.

"I know what she'll do," said Johnnie, with an air of superior wisdom. "She'll do as she

did once before when she had to go away; she had old Mrs. Hardy to come and sleep in the house and see to everything. Don't you know that nice old lady that lives with her daughter at the shop?"

There being only one shop in the village, Stephen had the less difficulty in bringing Mrs. Hardy to his mind.

Certainly she was a pleasant-faced old lady, but it would be very sad to see her in his aunt's place. If Mrs. Hardy could only go to Uncle John instead!

It is to be feared that Stephen was not quite so attentive as usual at school that morning. Certainly John was not, and he drew upon himself one of Mr. Willis' stern, quiet questions, "What are you thinking of, Wright?" which alarmed him very much. And no wonder; Mr. Willis had a way of asking those questions that was enough to frighten any one.

You may be sure that Johnnie was much more attentive for the rest of the morning; but he was still glad when the clock struck twelve, and all were free to run out of doors again.

"I wonder what aunt will do?" said Stephen as soon as he joined his brother.

"And that's what I've been wondering about all the morning," said Johnnie, laughing; "and Mr. Willis saw it. I do believe he sees one's thoughts."

Stephen said he hoped not, and then they had a race home—a race which Johnnie won of course, but as he was kind enough to wait for his brother at the garden gate, that did not much matter.

Mrs. Baynes, who was putting dinner on the table, looked up smiling as they ran in.

"Have you settled what you are going to do, aunt?" cried Johnnie, while Stephen only looked the question.

"Yes, my dear; I think I ought to go as soon as possible. So I shall try and get off to-morrow morning as soon as I have finished churning; and Mrs. Hardy has kindly promised to come here and look after you and the rest of my goods."

"I thought you would," said Johnnie rather sorrowfully.

"Well, I hope it will not be for long, and you must try how good you can be, and how much you can help Mrs. Hardy. But now come and have your dinner."

Stephen looked more disconsolate than Johnnie even, and all the afternoon and

evening he went about with quite a long face.

"What shall we do to-morrow?" was the last thing he said to his brother as they lay down in bed.

"Do!" Johnnie laughed a little. "Do our best, and leave the rest; aunt always says that's a good motto to have."

And Stephen sighed, but said no more.

They had to say good-bye to their aunt next morning before they went to school, for her train started at eleven o'clock.

"Won't the house seem strange when we come back?" said Johnnie; but his brother made no answer.

His teacher found Stephen rather inattentive again that morning, and when the clock struck eleven it was all the boy could do to avoid bursting into tears.

As to Johnnie, he seemed to have something else on his mind besides Mrs. Baynes' departure. He told Stephen to "go on" when they came out of school, and darted back himself to have a talk with a school-fellow. Stephen looked round, and saw it was with Ned Rice he was talking, the boy with whom he had quarrelled on Sunday. But Johnnie soon forgot quarrels, and was friends again.

"What can he want to say?" thought Stephen, who did not forget so easily. He walked on slowly, for he did not care about getting home now; but he reached the gate and went in before John came in sight.

"Good morning, Mrs. Hardy," he said to the neat, quick old lady who was getting dinner ready. "Is aunt gone?"

"Yes, my dear, that she is; I saw her off myself. And she was sorry to go and leave you, and the chickens and the cows were very much on her mind. But I promised her to do my best for you all. I've had a large farm, and family too, of my own in my day. Where's Johnnie?"

"He's coming," said Stephen, as he went upstairs. "Begin again," he thought to himself, remembering his aunt's words. "This is another beginning with Mrs. Hardy. We must try and begin well."

His thoughts were interrupted by Johnnie, who rushed upstairs laughing and rosy.

"Well, Stephen, so you got home first!"

"What did you want to say to Ned Rice?"

"Gunpowder treason and plot," returned the other, laughing. "Ah, Stephen! wouldn't you like to know?"

It was evident he was not going to be

told, and he felt a little vexed at the idea of his brother having a secret with Ned Rice, away from him. So he wisely said no more about it.

The afternoon and evening went by quietly, and much as usual, though it seemed strange to see Mrs. Hardy working in their aunt's place, and Stephen had not spirits to take down the Picture Bible, now that Mrs. Baynes was not there to explain it to him.

"How I wish aunt would come back!" he said next morning, and Johnnie said—

"All in good time."

But this morning it was easier to attend to the lessons; and when he had read his "a-b, ab; e-b, eb," &c., with infinite pains, he found that Mr. Willis was behind him listening too.

"Very good, Wright," said the master, patting his head. "You have made a very great progress in three weeks."

Was it possible those words were said to him, the dunce of the school?

Stephen's cheeks glowed, his eyes sparkled; he had never been so proud and pleased in his life.

Now he would really take courage to attend the Sunday school again, as his aunt wished.

"Boys," said Mr. Willis that morning, just before he dismissed the school, "I have lost a new knife that was given me by a friend the other day. I fancy I dropped it when walking on Saturday from here to Maverly Woods. It was in a green case, with my initials upon it in gold letters, 'H. W.' If any one can find it, or hear of it, I shall be very much obliged by his letting me know."

There was a chorus of "Yes, sirs;" but Johnnie got very red, and, as soon as they were out of school, ran up to Ned again and seemed to be questioning him eagerly. What could it be? Stephen thought. The knife? No; if Johnnie had known anything about that, he would have told the master at once, Stephen was sure.

Then what could it be? He wished Johnnie would not have secrets with Ned Rice; he did not like it. And with a little cloud of sullenness settling over him, he turned and plodded slowly homewards. Yet when his brother overtook him, merry and full of kindness, the sulky words soon changed to pleasant ones, and they were friends again. Stephen felt happy, and forgot all about Ned Rice.

But that night—Stephen never forgot the misery of it, not even when he was a grown

man—that night he was to be reminded of the secret, indeed.

Stephen had been in bed a few minutes ; Johnnie was still moving about in the room, but rather as if he were lingering idly than doing anything in particular. By-and-by he looked round at his brother, who was just going off to sleep ; but thinking Johnnie was going to speak to him, he roused himself and opened his eyes.

Johnnie, however, did not speak ; he thought his brother was sleeping already. Softly he opened a little drawer, and drew out a knife.

A large handsome knife, with a great white handle. He opened one blade after another, looked at them, flashed them backwards and forwards in the candle-light, then shut them, and put the knife softly back into the drawer.

Why had he hidden it there ? What had the master said to-day ? What was Johnnie's secret with Ned Rice ?

No ; it was impossible. His brother—his brave, kind, good, clever brother—a——Stephen could not end the sentence in his own mind even. It was too terrible ; it was impossible. And yet what—what did it all mean ?



Long, long hours after Johnnie was in bed and asleep, the younger brother lay, cold with horror and fright, thinking and thinking.

The blind was up, and the soft white moonlight was falling in great streaks across the room. Stephen raised himself on his elbow, and looked at his brother.

Sleeping, so softly, with his head upon his hand, the curls falling over his forehead, a smile upon his lips. Johnnie—dear Johnnie—you could not be a thief!

Stephen almost cried aloud with the terror and misery of his thoughts: hour after hour he could hear sounding from the church clock, and still he had thought of no relief—no explanation.

At last, when the dawn was coming pink and bright over the sky, he fell asleep and dreamed that he was happy—a dream that made his awaking all the more sad.

John could not think what was the matter with him. Distress had brought back all his half-sullen shyness, and he was as silent as when he first came to the farm. He could not ask his brother for an explanation; he knew he *could* not, and yet he longed so to tell him all.

“You can’t be well. You eat no breakfast,

my dear," said Mrs. Hardy; but she could get no reply.

"What's the matter?" said Johnnie, as they walked off to school. "Is it aunt's being away that puts you out, Stephen?"

"No."

The tone was so very unpromising, that John shrugged his shoulders and took to whistling.

Oh! how could he be so jolly if——Stephen trembled at the idea. The lessons were all hard that day; the teacher scolded him, and he did try to do better, but his head was full of nothing but his dread.

At last a thought came to him; perhaps it was Ned's doing. He had only asked Johnnie to take care of the knife and not tell, and Johnnie did not know whose it was. Or perhaps it was another knife after all.

He went straight up to Ned when they came out of school, and said in a low, determined way—

"Ned, do you know anything about Mr. Willis' knife?"

Ned started at first, and turned very red; then, recovering himself, he said rudely—

"What are you prying about now?"

Stephen repeated his question.

"I expect I know as much as you know," returned Ned. "Perhaps Johnnie knows the most about it of any one."

"Johnnie! Then—he"——Stephen's voice faltered.

"Ah! you know all about it, I see," sneered Ned. "You'd better take care what you say to me, or I'll just let Mr. Willis know what you know."

He turned and ran off, leaving Stephen white and speechless with distress.

Mrs. Hardy and his brother thought him very rude and sulky all that day, and his teacher made him stand out of the class in disgrace for his inattention in the afternoon. It was the first time such a misfortune had come to him, but he did not seem to mind, not even when Mr. Willis looked down upon him, saying—

"Why, Wright, I expected better things of you."

That would have seemed very terrible indeed yesterday, but now nothing mattered—nothing could matter any more if Johnnie was guilty.

"I think you must be ill, Stephen," his brother said next morning.

They had had a letter from Mrs. Baynes,

telling them her uncle was better, and she hoped they would see her back on Saturday. Would they pick the strawberries to-morrow (Friday), and send them in to the market by Mrs. Brown?

Stephen did not seem to care about the letter at all, and hence his brother's remark. But it brought no answer, and things went on as badly that day as the day before.

Very early on Friday morning Stephen got up. His distress would not let him sleep, and his brother drowsily told him to go and gather the strawberries.

He took the basket and went to the beds, where the red berries were making a fine show the previous night. But what was his indignation to find Ned Rice there already, eating as fast as he could, trampling over the plants, all the fruit devoured and destroyed.

"Ned!" he exclaimed angrily.

"Ay, it's Ned," retorted the other, grinning, with his mouth full, and his face stained with juice. "I'm enjoying myself, I am."

"You thief, you!" cried Stephen, passionately.

"Oh! I'm a thief, am I? Look out if there isn't a thief nearer home. You just look here, Stephen Wright; you go and say one word of

your catching me here, and I'll tell the master who's got his knife. There's plain speaking for you ; do you understand ?" and Ned, who was two years older than Stephen, took hold of him fiercely. " You haven't said a word to Johnnie about the knife ?"

" No."

" You hold your tongue then, and don't say a word about me to him, or about being here to-day, or I'll just tell the master what the good boy's got of his ; you may trust to that ;" and, releasing his hold, Ned dashed off across the beds, jumped the garden fence, and vanished.

Stephen stood looking at the beds, spoilt—all spoilt ; not a strawberry to send, and what was he to say ? How was he to join in this deceit ? How could he answer all the questions they would put to him ? Oh ! how miserable he was ! What should he do ? He was sitting on the door-step, moodily enough, when Johnnie came singing downstairs.

" Well, Stephen, have you gathered my strawberries ?"

" No."

" Hullo ! you have been lazy. Here, give me the basket ; I'll go and get them."

" There are none."

"None! why, whatever do you mean? There were plenty last night—there must be some;" and off he ran, but returned in a moment full of consternation.

"Why, Stephen, somebody's been in and taken almost all, and trampled down the seed. What a shame! There must be thieves about."

"There must be," repeated the other in a low tone.

"I wonder who ever it could have been. I wish I'd been a little earlier to catch him, the rascal! I never knew a thief to come into the garden before."

Stephen, with his elbows on his knees and his face buried in his hands, neither answered nor moved.

"Did you see any one about, Stephen?"

No answer.

"I say, did you see any one? Do just say you know."

Still no answer, and Johnnie's patience gave way.

"I do declare it's a shame to be so sulky," he exclaimed. "One might as well have no brother at all, as one that won't speak to you;" and he rushed into the house.

Poor Stephen! they thought him very sulky

at school too ; his teacher kept him back as the others went out, and when they were gone took him up to Mr. Willis.

"I am sorry to complain, sir, but nearly all the week Stephen Wright has been very sulky and idle, there is no doing anything with him, and he was getting on so well before." Whereupon the teacher retreated, and left Stephen alone with the master.

"How is this, Stephen? Why don't you behave yourself better?"

"I can't," muttered the boy, huskily.

"But you were doing so well till the last few days. Begin again, Stephen ; try to get on. There's no worse motto than 'I can't' for any one. Say I *can*, and make it true. Don't let me hear these complaints again ; you mean to be a good boy, I'm sure. There ! be off with you, and come in a better temper this afternoon."

Stephen went away, choking down the sob that was rising in his throat, and found Johnnie waiting for him.

"Never mind," he said kindly ; "you'll be all right when aunt comes back ;" then they walked home in silence.



#### CHAP. VI.—ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE.

WHEN Mrs. Baynes came home on Saturday, she was a good deal surprised at the change in Stephen, and took an opportunity of asking Johnnie what was the matter ; but she could hear nothing, and the boy himself seemed resolved not to speak.

He quietly went back to the Sunday school when Sunday morning came, and when there was time in the afternoon he seemed glad to hear some more about the Bible pictures, but he was strangely silent all the time.

"There was once," said Mrs. Baynes, "a good man, whose name was Abraham, and the Lord God called him to leave the country in which he was living, and where all his friends were, and go into another land which was quite strange to him. Abraham was very full of faith—that is, he knew so well that God knew best, and would love him and take care of him, that he trusted in God altogether,



and was not afraid of leaving everything to the mercy and holy will of his Father in heaven. In this we ought all to try and follow Abraham's example; we should remember that our Father is so wise He knows exactly what is best for us, and so good and merciful He wills exactly what is best for us, so that whatever happens to us is just the very best thing for us. If we can remember this, and leave ourselves altogether to God's will, we have faith, as Abraham had faith. There is a hymn that says—

‘All is right that seems most wrong,  
If it be Thy good will;’

and it would be well for us to remember that whenever we are troubled.

“It seemed hard to Abraham, I dare say, to leave his country and all his relations to go into the strange land. But he did it at once, and the Lord promised him that some day all that land should belong to his family, and that he should be the father of a great nation, as many as the stars in the sky. This seemed very strange, as Abraham and his wife Sarah had no children; but he knew that the Lord was almighty, and left it all to him. At last Sarah had a child, a little boy, and they

called his name Isaac, which in their language meant 'Laughter,' because they were so pleased to have him; and they loved him very dearly, and only thought of bringing him up well, thinking often, no doubt, of the great people that should descend from him and possess the land in which they were living as strangers. And now, when Isaac had grown to be a big boy, it pleased the Lord to give Abraham a great opportunity of showing his faith, and leaving a good example to all who know his story.

"One night, when Abraham had laid down to rest, he heard the voice of the Lord God calling to him, and saying, 'Abraham!'

"And Abraham answered—

" 'Behold, here I am.'

"And then the Lord spoke again, and said—

" 'Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of.'

"What terrible words for Abraham to hear, as he listened for God's voice in the darkness! His son, his dear child that he loved so, and from whom he hoped so much—to be commanded to kill him!

"Surely no one ever heard such a terrible command as this, and we might expect to hear it answered with a prayer to the Lord to take anything but this—any sacrifice but this.

"But Abraham made no answer; he knew the Lord knew best; he would leave it all—just *all*—to Him.

"And he did not wait; the Lord had spoken, His servant should obey at once, and when the morning light returned he rose up very early and prepared for his journey. The land of Moriah was many miles from the part where Abraham lived, and he saddled his ass, called two of his servants and his son Isaac to go with him, and cut up some wood and took it with him to be ready for the burnt-offering.

"Then he started on his strange, dreadful journey, travelled for nearly three days, till on the third day Abraham looked up and saw the mountain of which the Lord had told him lying before him.

"All this time Abraham had said nothing to his child of the object of his journey; perhaps he felt as if he could not tell him—perhaps he thought to spare Isaac the terror of such news.

"At any rate nothing was said, and when the mountain was in sight, Abraham told his

servants to stay below with the ass, while he and his son went up the mountain to make their offering; and he took the wood he had prepared, and gave it to Isaac to carry, and he himself took fire in something like a lamp, and a knife.

"Isaac understood quite well that there were preparations for offering a sacrifice, but he could not think what his father was going to offer, and as they went away together he said to Abraham—

" 'My father!'

"And Abraham answered—

" 'Here am I, my son.'

"And Isaac went on—

" 'Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?'

"Still Abraham would not tell him the dreadful thing that was to be done, and he only said—

" 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.'

"And so they went on and on till they had climbed all up the mountain, and then they made an altar, and put the wood in its place upon it; and then there was no help for it—Abraham was obliged to tell Isaac all. We are not told what Isaac said—whether he had

learned from his father to be quite sure that all must be right that was God's will; we only hear what Abraham did—that he bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood, and then he stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

The trial was over, Abraham had showed his faith to the last, and now the help was coming. Through the great stillness of the mountain-top came a strange sound—a voice that called from heaven—

“‘Abraham! Abraham!’

“It was the angel of the Lord who was calling, and who brought this message from God—

“‘Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him, for now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.’

“And as Abraham looked round, he saw that the words he had spoken in his trouble had come true in his joy; the Lord had provided a sacrifice, for behind him was a ram caught in the thicket by his horns, sent by God's mercy to take the place of Isaac.

“Then Abraham released his son, and went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his child.

“ And again the angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of heaven, and said to him—

“ ‘ Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son : that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is upon the sea shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice.’

“ This meant that from Abraham’s family should come a great nation, stronger than their enemies, and that when our Saviour came into the world it should be as one of the descendants of Abraham.

“ After hearing this message, so full of joyful promise, Abraham and his son went down the mountain again, back to the place where they had left the servants. We can fancy what a happy journey that must have been home again—how every stone and tree they passed must have reminded Abraham of the time when he passed them in so much distress, to return in such great joy.

“ Now that is a beautiful story of faithful Abraham, and, like all the Bible stories, it has many lessons to teach us.

“One thing we see in it is, that it seems to show beforehand what the mercy of God was to do for man some day. As Abraham prepared to offer up his son, so it pleased God after many, many years to give up His son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to die for the sin of the world. Abraham showed his love to God by what he prepared to do, and the Lord God showed His love to man by what He did. Isaac carried the wood for the offering up the mountain, not knowing why he did it ; but our Saviour went forth, bearing His Cross to the mountain where he was to suffer, well knowing what He did, desiring to die, that so He might save us. Of Abraham we read—‘Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son.’ Of the Lord God Himself it is said, ‘So God loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’

“And there is another lesson in this story that concerns ourselves, our own conduct especially. Dearly as Abraham loved his son, he loved his God better ; he was ready rather to slay Isaac than to disobey the Lord. This is a very important lesson for us. Dearly as we love our friends, we must never let our love lead us to do wrong for their sakes.”

Stephen, who had been sitting very quietly with his eyes on the book, suddenly reddened at these words, and asked eagerly—

“How could we do wrong for their sakes?”

“If we did what we knew we ought not to do to please them, or left off doing right because our friends did not like it; or if we allowed ourselves to be deceitful, to say what was not true in order to hide the faults of those who were dear to us, should we not be doing wrong for their sakes?”

Mrs. Baynes had no suspicion that Stephen was in any particular need of this warning; she spoke only in general; but it seemed to the boy as if the words were addressed to the troubled thoughts of his heart.

That very morning there had been some discussion about the strawberry business, and Johnnie had been declaring in the innocence of his heart that never had anything been so mysterious.

“Stephen went down in the morning to look, and then they had all vanished. He saw nobody about.”

“Really, Stephen, that was very odd,” said Mrs. Baynes, unsuspectingly. “How early did you go down, my dear?”

“I don’t know.”



“And you did not hear any one run away, or see any sign of the thieves?”

Stephen hesitated, he did not say a word very distinctly, but yet he felt somehow that he had consented to a lie.

It had been heavy on his heart all day; he had never lied before, not even in his dark and terrified days, and now that he knew better!

But he dared not speak for fear of betraying Johnnie; and now what was this that he heard?—what warning about preferring the friend to the right? Could this have been the sacrifice that was asked of him, and had he refused it? But then how could he sacrifice Johnnie?

The idea troubled him so much that his aunt could not help noticing the agitation of his face.

“My dear, what is it?” she asked gently. “Tell me what makes you look so unhappy?”

“No; I’ve nothing to tell,” said he, almost crossly; and then, to his great relief, his aunt saw a neighbour coming down the garden, and went away. Afterwards Johnnie came in singing and smiling; Stephen watched him sadly, and wondered more and more.



#### CHAP. VII.—ISAAC'S BLESSING.

THE quiet Sunday passed away, but it seemed to bring none of its peace to Stephen; the thoughts that had troubled him were with him all day. Sometimes he thought of telling all to his aunt; sometimes of speaking to Johnnie himself, and imploring him to give back the knife.

But he could not betray his brother, he told himself; and then how angry John would be—how horrified at Stephen's discovering him! No, he could not; and while he felt he dared not do what he knew to be right, conscience left him no peace in doing wrong.

So much the better for him, and yet it made him very miserable.

At last bed-time came, and he went slowly and sorrowfully upstairs, sat down at the side of the bed, and thought.

Johnnie looked at him for a while, walking

about the room, whistling the evening hymn to himself. At last he began to sing it.

“Teach me to live, that I may dread  
The grave as little as my bed.”

His brother's dark eyes were raised and fixed upon him.

“Being wicked,” said Stephen suddenly, “would make you dread them both, I suppose?”

Stephen had been so silent lately, that John was quite delighted to hear him speak of his own accord ; but as he had not been thinking much of the words he sang, he did not understand the observation.

“Dread what, Stephen?”

Stephen repeated the lines slowly.

“I suppose you would be afraid of going to bed, because you would have no peace there ; and afraid of dying, because you would have to be judged then, and get no peace.”

“Well, I suppose so,” returned the other, who was more given to singing hymns than to considering what they meant.

“It would be dreadful to lie down in bed in the dark, and remember some very bad thing you had done. I should think it would go over and over in your head and let you get no rest.”

"I'm sure I hope we are not going to try," said John, in his offhand way. "We don't mean to be thieves and murderers, do we, Stephen?"

And then he stared with all his might, for his brother pressed his hands together, and cried out, "Oh, Johnnie!" as if something had hurt him.

John was by his side in a moment, putting his arm round him, and begging to know what was the matter.

"I've seen you weren't all right the last day or two," he said, in his most loving voice. "Do tell me, Stephen! If anything was on my mind, I'm sure I'd tell you. If you are in any scrape, do tell me; you know that must be right."

Oh, how Stephen longed to bring out the truth! But no, the words seemed to choke him, he could not speak.

"What is it, Stephen, dear?"

But the poor boy was too miserable to answer gently.

"Let me alone!" that was all he could utter, in a rough, sullen tone; and his brother, who could not guess at all the love and sorrow that were keeping him silent, grew vexed and disappointed.

"As you like," he said, and went off again whistling.

"I will try and forget it all," said Stephen to himself next day, and he tried to talk and laugh, to work hard at school, and wait on his aunt at home, and be too busy to remember; but he was remembering all the time.

In the evening, as his aunt was at work, he begged her to go on explaining the pictures to him; for he dreaded nothing so much as sitting still to think. Mrs. Baynes could see through all his busy ways that he was not happy, and she was glad to give him something good to think about. So she complied at once, and went on with the Bible story.

"When Isaac grew up, his mother died, and Abraham, having no one left to care for but his son, grew very anxious to see him comfortably married before he himself died.

"The women in the country to which God had called Abraham were not very good people, and Abraham wished Isaac to marry one of his own relations, who lived in those parts where Abraham was born. So one day he called a faithful old servant that he had to him, and told him that Isaac must not go back to the old home, for the Lord had called him from it. 'But,' he said, 'thou shalt go unto

my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.'

"So the servant promised to do as his master wished, and took ten camels to carry presents for Abraham's friends, and the other things required, and started on his journey. And he travelled on and on till he came to the city where Abraham's relations lived. It was one evening that he reached it, and he rested a little while just outside the city, by a well that was there. Now the wells in those parts were places where many women would meet at this time in the day, for it was the custom to drive all the flocks down to the well about sunset, and give them water there, and draw water besides for themselves. So Abraham's servant thought he would wait here and see if he could find some woman amongst them who might become Isaac's wife. And while he waited, he prayed to God and said, 'O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say,

Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.'

"The servant had not finished his prayer, before he saw a young girl coming towards him out of the city, with her pitcher on her shoulder, to draw water from the well. As she came nearer, he saw that she was beautiful, and he watched her go down to the well and fill her pitcher and come up again. Then he came forward and asked her for water, as he had said he would do in his prayer, and she answered, just as he had prayed that the right wife for Isaac might answer, 'Drink, my lord,' and she gave him some water out of her pitcher, and went on, 'and I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.'

"And the servant did not answer, but stood wondering whether this was indeed the answer to his prayer.

"But when she had given the camels all the water they wanted, in a trough that was put for cattle by the well, he took out some of the presents he had brought with him—a golden earring and bracelets—and gave them to her, saying—

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“ ‘Whose daughter art thou?’

“And she told him her father's name, and then the servant knew that she was one of Abraham's own relations. She begged him also to come with her, for they had straw and food enough for the camels, she said, and room to put them in. And the man bowed down his head, and thanked God for having so far prospered his journey, while the girl ran home to show her presents, and tell all about the stranger she had met by the well.

“Hearing this, her brother, whose name was Laban, now came out, and found the servant standing by his camels, and Laban said to him—

“ ‘Come in, thou blessed of the Lord; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels.’

“Then the man followed Laban home, taking with him the camels and the other men that were with him, and they were all most kindly received, and the animals were attended to, and a meal prepared for the men at once. But before Abraham's messenger tasted anything, he said—

“ ‘I will not eat, until I have told mine errand.’



“And then he told them all his story, and what he had come for, and who his master was; and how Laban’s sister Rebekah had seemed to come to the well in answer to his prayer. This made them think it was God’s will that Rebekah should become the wife of Isaac, so she consented to go back with the servant to the land where Abraham lived.

“One evening, Isaac, who was very unhappy at having lost his mother not long before, went out into the fields to walk about and think, when, happening to look up, he saw a party of camels coming towards him. They were his father’s camels travelling with Rebekah. She, too, caught sight of him as she came nearer, and asked the servant who he was. And the servant told her.

“Then she got off her camel, and walked forward to meet him, and Isaac took her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and she became his wife; and he loved her, and was comforted after his mother’s death.

“Isaac and Rebekah had two sons, called Esau and Jacob. Esau, the eldest, was a rough sort of youth, fond of hunting and going out with his father; Jacob was quieter, and more content to stop at home with his mother. So it happened that Isaac thought

the most of Esau, and Rebekah's favourite was Jacob.

"One day, when they were grown up to be men, Esau had been out hunting, and coming home very hungry, he saw that Jacob had just got some dinner ready. So the elder brother said—

" 'Feed me, I pray thee, for I am faint.'

"And Jacob said he would, if Esau would give up to him his rights as eldest son. Esau was very careless and impatient, so he said in a moment that he would give up all his rights to Jacob. Then the younger brother gave him the food he wanted, and Esau ate and drank, and went out again, forgetting all about this promise. But it was a very serious thing, as he ought to have remembered, for the eldest son, in those days, received a special blessing from his father, when the time of the father's death drew near; and in Esau's family this blessing would have included the promise that the Redeemer of the world should be one of his descendants. But this rough, impatient man did not think about it at all; the Bible says, 'He despised his birthright.' This is what made him wrong. Jacob was also wrong, but in another way; he valued the birthright so much, that he was selfish for

its sake. So time went on ; Esau married two wives (for people were allowed in those days to take more than one wife), and his wives were not good people, and caused his father and mother great grief. At last Isaac had become quite an old man, and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, and he thought the time had come for him to give his eldest son the precious blessing before his death.

"These blessings were not like ours, only prayers for our children's happiness ; but whatever the fathers foretold in those blessings, the Lord gave to their sons.

"Isaac did not seem to know anything about the bargain Esau and Jacob had made together ; he only called Esau, and said, 'Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death : now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison ; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me, that I may eat ; that my soul may bless thee before I die.'

"So Esau went out to hunt the deer for his father, while Rebekah, who had overheard them, called her son Jacob, and told him what they were going to do.

“‘Go now,’ she said, ‘to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth: and thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.’

“Then she dressed Jacob in Esau’s clothes, and put the skins of the kids upon his hands, that his poor blind father might not feel the difference between Esau’s rough hands and Jacob’s smooth ones; and she got the meat ready, and Jacob went in to deceive his father, and pretend he was Esau come back from hunting.

“Isaac was surprised at first at his coming so quickly, and he called him near and felt him, saying, ‘The voice is Jacob’s voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.’

“So poor old Isaac was deceived; he ate the meat that Jacob brought, and blessed him, saying—

“God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.’

"Then Jacob went away, and had barely got out before Esau came in from hunting, and hurried to his father, saying that he had brought the venison, and begged for the blessing.

"Then Isaac trembled very much, and said, 'Who art thou? Where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed?'

"And Esau cried with a loud bitter cry, 'Bless me, even me also, O my father.' And he complained of his brother, and said, 'He hath taken away my birthright, and now he hath taken away my blessing;' and he went on imploring his father, and saying—

"'Hast thou but one blessing, my father? 'Bless me, even me also, O my father.' And at last Isaac blessed him too, and said—

"'Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.'

"Esau could get no better promise. Jacob seemed to have prospered in his deceit, but

he was soon to find how dearly anything is bought at the expense of truth.

"Rebekah soon heard that Esau was furious against his brother, and even resolved to kill him as soon as their father should be dead. So she told Jacob that he must go away and leave his home—the poor old father he had cheated, and the mother who had loved him too well—and go to her brother Laban, to be safe from Esau. Poor Rebekah! she, too, had to learn that those who take up deceit take up a heavy load that will crush them at last. She sent away her favourite son, and never, in all the weary years that followed, did she look upon his face again.

"And Jacob went forth sorrowful, and, I hope, repentant, to journey to the land and kindred whom he did not know. Indeed the Lord had pity on him, and the first night of his wanderings, as he lay down to sleep out of doors, with stones for his pillow, he had a beautiful dream. He saw a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven, and on it the angels of God were going up and down, and at the top was the Lord God, who promised to take care of him then and for ever.

"And so it came to pass; Jacob was always protected by the Lord, yet his uncle Laban,

and afterwards his own children, cheated him, and made him suffer by deceit, as he had made his father and brother suffer.

"I think Jacob's lesson is, most of all, to fear deceit—to know that, however falsehood seems to prosper, its punishment must come at last, even if we repent and are forgiven. Others will distrust us, as we shall get to distrust them, one way or the other; if we are false, we must be miserable.

"Remember this, my dear child, if you are ever tempted to be untrue; a lie is a terrible load; the farther you carry it the heavier it grows. If you are ever so unhappy as to say what is not true, remember this lesson, and lay down the burden at once by speaking out; do not try to go on your way carrying that load, or it will crush you at last."

Stephen drew a deep sigh. Had he not begun taking up the load of falsehood? and how could he ever lay it down? Ah! there was no forgetting—none! He put up the Bible, and walked out of the room without a word.





#### CHAP. VIII.—JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

“JACOB lived many years with his uncle Laban—” so Mrs. Baynes went on the next time that Stephen was studying the Bible pictures—“and he did not go back to his old home till he was quite an elderly man, and the father of twelve sons. Esau had forgiven him then, but Jacob lived to be reminded of his old fault by the deceitful treatment he met with from his own children.

“Of all his sons Jacob best loved Joseph, who was the youngest but one, and very good; and he made this son a coat of many colours. The other brothers were jealous of Joseph, more especially when he dreamed some curious dreams, that seemed to them a sign that he should rule over them all some day.

“At last, when Joseph was almost a man, it happened that his ten elder brothers were feeding their sheep at some little distance

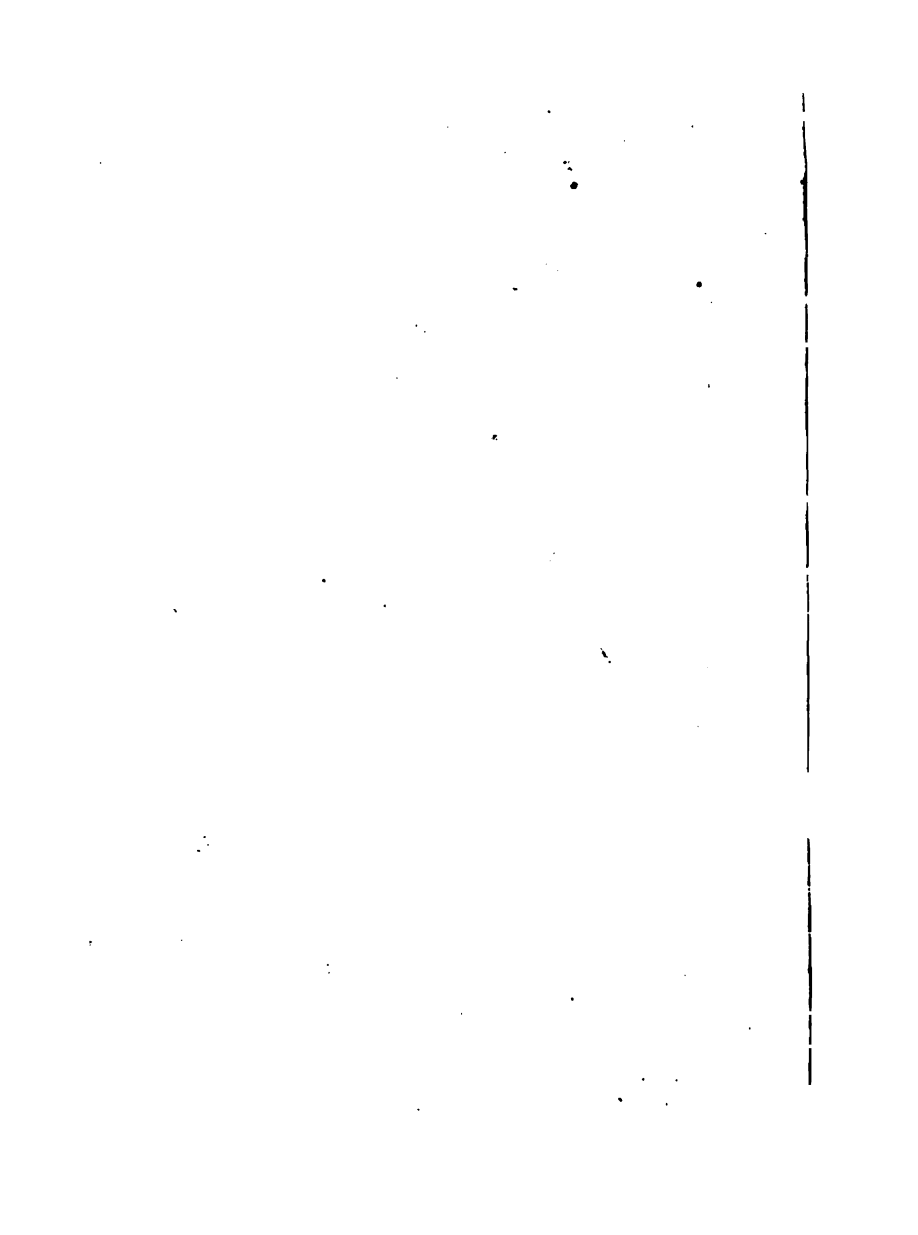


from home, and Jacob told Joseph to go and see how they were getting on. He went, and when his brothers saw him, they felt very angry with him, and said—

“‘Look, this dreamer is coming.’

“And a dreadful thought came to them, and they said, ‘Let us kill him, and throw him down some hole, and tell our father that a wild beast has eaten him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams.’ But the eldest brother Reuben would not hear of this crime. He dared not tell his brothers so, because some of them were so very violent and wicked, but he tried to persuade them to leave their brother in a great pit close by, thinking, when they were gone, he could lift Joseph out again, and take him home to his father. So when poor Joseph came up to them, they pulled off his coat of many colours, and put him down into the pit to starve and die. And just then there came up some men who went about trading and buying slaves, and as Reuben had left them for a little while, they changed their minds and said they would sell their brother for a slave. So they lifted him up out of the pit, and sold him to these strangers for twenty pieces of silver, and he was taken away as a slave into a foreign





country—the land of Egypt. When Reuben came back and saw that Joseph was gone, he did not know what to do with himself, he was so miserable. And the wicked brothers killed a kid, and stained Joseph's coat of many colours with the blood, and brought it to Jacob, saying, 'We have found this; know if it be thy son's coat or no.'

"Jacob knew it only too well; the sight almost broke his heart, for he thought some wild beast had killed his son; the wicked brethren pretended to comfort him, and Reuben even hid their crime, and deceived his poor father too. And yet I wonder how they could have helped telling the truth, when they heard the poor old man weeping, and saying—

"‘I will go down to my son's grave mourning.’

"Meanwhile, Joseph had been sold as a slave to a great officer in Egypt named Potiphar, who at first treated him very kindly. But the wife of Potiphar was a very wicked woman, and she told her husband such stories against Joseph, that his master got angry with him, and cast him into prison.

"But even here Joseph's goodness and gentleness made him liked by all, and the keeper of the prison employed him to take

care of the other prisoners. Two of these poor men happened to be servants of the king of Egypt, whose name was Pharaoh, and it chanced that they dreamed curious dreams that had a great deal of meaning in them—for people used sometimes to be allowed to do that in those days. They did not understand the dreams themselves, but the Lord gave Joseph so much wisdom, that he told them the meaning of their dreams, which was that one should be put to death, and the other restored to favour by the king.

“This came true, and the servant who was restored to favour went back and waited on King Pharaoh as before.

“At first this man forgot all about Joseph in his prosperity, but one day King Pharaoh said he had had a strange dream, and none of his wise men could tell him what it meant.

“Then the servant remembered Joseph, and asked the king to send for him. Pharaoh did so, and the poor prisoner was fetched in a hurry from the dark dungeon to the royal palace.

“And Pharaoh said—

“‘I have heard said of thee that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.’

“But Joseph answered—

“ ‘ No ; it is not me. God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.’ ”

“ Then Pharaoh told his dream, and Joseph told him it meant that seven years of great plenty were coming on the land, and then seven years of famine ; so that Pharaoh had better get together all the corn he could in the seven good years, that the people might not starve in the bad ones.

“ Pharaoh was so delighted with Joseph’s wisdom, that he made him a great prince over all the land of Egypt, and told him to see about saving up all the corn he could for food. Joseph did so, and managed so well that, though the famine was dreadful, and nothing grew for seven years, there was enough of his saving to keep the people from starving. Everybody was grateful to him, and Joseph married a great lady, and all the people in Egypt looked up to him as next to the king. But the famine was very bad in other countries too—in the land where Jacob lived ; but there was a report there that there was corn in Egypt. So Joseph’s ten elder brethren came down to buy food. Their father would not let Benjamin, the youngest, go, for he was his favourite now that Joseph was gone.

“And Joseph’s brethren did not know him at all; they took him for an Egyptian prince; but he knew them, and tried to find out if they were any better than they used to be.

“He spoke roughly to them, and told them they were spies. But they said very humbly, No; they were only Hebrew people come from their own country, where they had left an old father and a younger brother behind.

“Then Joseph said he should take one of them, named Simeon, and keep him prisoner, while they went home and took the food they wanted, and brought back their younger brother to show they spoke the truth.

“This made them very unhappy, and thinking Joseph could not understand their language (for he spoke in the Egyptian tongue to them), they began saying among themselves how miserable they were, and how this was a punishment for ill-using Joseph.

“This made Joseph turn away and cry; but they did not see it, and he sent them home, keeping Simeon behind.

“Jacob was very unhappy when he heard it, and said Benjamin should not go down to Egypt, for he said, ‘If mischief befall him by the way in which ye go, then shall ye bring

down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

"At last, however, they persuaded him to let the young man go, and back they went to Egypt.

"Joseph was so glad to see them, that he had to hurry away to his own chamber to cry there; afterwards he made all the eleven brothers come and dine with him, and they were merry with him.

"But when they were going away, he made his servants put back the money they paid for their corn into their sacks, and in Benjamin's sack a beautiful silver cup of Joseph's. The brothers went away, knowing nothing of this; but presently a messenger came hurrying after them, saying they had stolen Joseph's cup, and must come back again. They said they had taken nothing; but when the messenger looked, there was the cup in Benjamin's sack.

"Then they all went back sorrowful and afraid, and Joseph said he should keep Benjamin in prison because he had stolen the cup.

"Then the brothers showed how changed they were; they could not go back and leave Benjamin behind, and break their father's heart; and one of those who had been so cruel to Joseph now implored him to let Benjamin



go home, saying he would stay in prison himself instead.

"Then Joseph could bear no more ; he told all his servants to go and leave him alone with his brothers, and when they were alone he cried and said, 'I am Joseph ! does my father yet live ?' And they were too much frightened and astonished to answer, till he spoke so kindly to them that he made them happy again. He told them that the famine would last five years more, and they and their father and all their families must come down to live in Egypt, and he would take care of them ; and he kissed them all with tears, loving and forgiving them. Then they all went home and told their father, 'Joseph is yet alive, and is governor over all the land of Egypt.' And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph which he had said to them, and Jacob said, 'It is enough ; Joseph, my son, is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die.'

"How joyful must that meeting have been between Jacob and his long-lost son ! After all that sorrow, the poor old father found happiness and peace at last, and lived near his dearly-loved son until the day of his death.

“And Joseph passed the rest of his life in Egypt, a prosperous and respected man.

“I think the lesson of his beautiful story is this: that the wrong doings of others shall not harm us really, if only we keep on doing right ourselves.

“In Potiphar’s house, in the prison, in Pharaoh’s palace, Joseph always did his best, and prospered at last, in spite of all the wrong he suffered. He acted always on the beautiful command, ‘Be not overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.’”





CHAP. IX.—THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE  
WILDERNESS.

“OVERCOME evil with good,” Stephen thought to himself, as he came out of school the next day. “I am sure that is very hard. I think I am ‘overcome of evil’ much more.”

And as he was thinking this, the very person whose conduct had suggested the thought to him stood at his side.

“Stephen,” said Ned Rice in a low tone, but with a broad smile on his face, “I want a word with you.”

“I don’t want any with you,” retorted Stephen, frowning. “I’ll have nothing to do with you.”

“Better not say that,” returned the other. “We know what we know—eh, Stephen? We don’t want to get our dear brother into trouble. We’ll have a little chat now, won’t we?”

Angry as he felt, Stephen dared not refuse, but walked off by his tormentor’s side.

"Stephen," said Ned in an impressive way, "do you know that the cherries in your aunt's orchard are just ripe?"

"Yes, we've been picking some," said Stephen. "But you can't get at them as you did at the strawberries; the wall's too high, and the door's locked."

"Yes; but you can unlock it for me, and that's what you've got to do to-night; leave it so that I may find it open early to-morrow. Do you hear?"

Stephen's indignation here suddenly boiled over.

"How dare you say such things to me! I'll tell my aunt that there are thieves about, and get her to let the watch-dog loose to catch them."

"Say a word about me, or leave the gate locked when I tell you to have it open, and see what I'll say of Johnnie!"

"I don't care," retorted Stephen, running away in a rage, pursued by a threatening shout from Ned, to which he paid no attention, never stopping till he reached his brother at the garden gate.

"Why, Stephen, what's the matter?" Johnnie called in his turn. "What was Ned saying to you?"

Stephen made no answer; he fell again into a mood of sullen silence, and, passing his brother without a word, ran up to his own room.

What was he to do? "Overcome evil with good;" tell his aunt the whole truth, and take the consequences? She would know best what was to be done; she would be as kind to Johnnie as any one could be. But no, he could not. Yet of one thing he was quite certain; he could not do this wicked thing that Ned asked of him, let what would come to pass.

Firm in this at least, he avoided Ned after school, and ran home as fast as he could, where he set to work helping his aunt, and then learning how to spell "c-a-t," and so on, as usual. He dared not think about what might be coming.

"Do you know why I am making this plum cake?" said his aunt, smiling, as she showed him one ready for the oven that afternoon. "To-morrow is your birthday, Stephen, and we must have a little feast."

Stephen had never had any notice taken of his birthday before, indeed he hardly knew which day it was, and now he could not find a smile and a "thank you" for his aunt. He

was too unhappy to talk, and only felt relieved when she took out her work and told him he might fetch the Bible as usual.

"After many years had gone by," Mrs. Baynes said, "the descendants of Jacob grew to be so many that they were quite a large nation, and were called Israelites, or children of Israel, because Jacob was also called Israel.

"Long after Joseph and all his generation died, another Pharaoh reigned over Egypt, and he was afraid of the Israelites getting too strong for the Egyptians. So he treated them very cruelly, and at last ordered that every son that was born to the Israelites should be thrown into the river—the great river Nile that flows through Egypt. A little while after this dreadful order was given, a woman of the Israelites had a son, and hid him in her own house for three months. Then, thinking Pharaoh's people were going to find him and drown him, she did a curious thing. She made a little cradle of rushes, and put him in it, and laid it among the rushes on the river brink, while his sister stood a little way off watching it.

"By-and-by who should come past but a princess—one of Pharaoh's daughters! and, seeing the cradle, she sent her maid to fetch

it. When the princess opened it, and saw the pretty baby which was in it crying, she felt pity for it, and guessed that it was a poor Israelite's child.

"Then the sister took courage to come forward and say to her, 'Shall I go and call a nurse, that she may nurse the child for thee?'

"And the princess said, 'Go.' So Moses' sister went and fetched the child's own mother to be his nurse, and the poor little baby was kept safely under the protection of the princess.

"But when Moses grew up and knew that he was an Israelite, he could not bear to see his people oppressed; and when an Egyptian was ill-using one of them one day, Moses fought with the Egyptian and killed him.

"After this he had to leave Pharaoh's country, and he went into another land called Midian. Here Moses worked as a shepherd for a rich man named Jethro, and married his daughter.

"One day Moses was out with his sheep, when he saw a very strange thing—a bush all burning with fire, and yet not being burned up. He came near to look, and there he heard the voice of God speaking to him out of the midst of the fire. And God told him





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that he was to go back to Egypt and lead the people of Israel out, that they might not be slaves to Pharaoh any longer, but go and possess the Promised Land, that good land which the Lord had promised to Abraham long ago.

"Moses was to go and ask Pharaoh to let them go, and as he had a great difficulty in speaking, the Lord commanded his brother Aaron to go and speak for him.

"When Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that they had a message from God for him, telling him to let the people of Israel leave the land of Egypt, the king refused to obey. But the Lord sent many punishments, as plagues, to him for his disobedience.

"At last the Lord sent a message by Moses and Aaron, that if Pharaoh would not let the people of Israel go, the eldest child of every Egyptian should die that night. But the king again hardened his heart, and would not obey.

"Then Moses told the children of Israel the dreadful thing that was to happen that night, and that every family of the Israelites was to kill a lamb, and sprinkle the doors of their houses with the blood. Then the Israelites were to feast upon the lambs they had killed, all standing up and ready for a

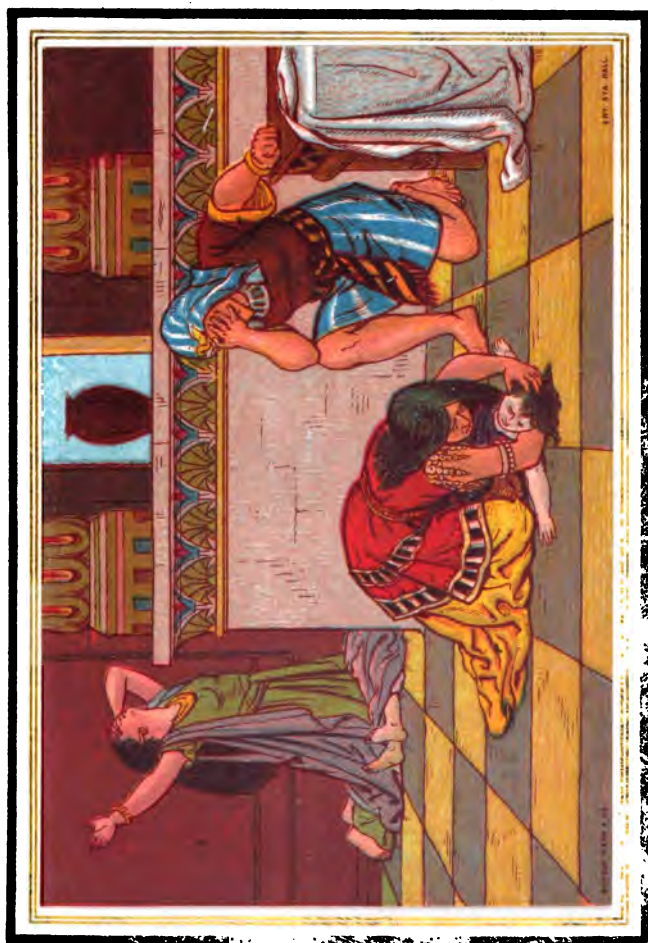
journey, because after the Egyptian children were dead, Pharaoh would be in a hurry to let them go.

"This feast was to be called the 'Passover,' because the Egyptians should die, but the Israelites should be passed over, when they had sprinkled their doors with blood. Every year they were to repeat this feast afterwards, in remembrance of their deliverance out of the land of Egypt.

"The Israelites did just as Moses commanded them, and they knew that God spoke by him; they killed the lambs, and sprinkled their doors, and feasted in haste, when that terrible night came.

"And at midnight we read, 'The Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on the throne to the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians, and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.'

"Then in his fright the king sent for Moses and Aaron, and told them to leave the country at once, and take all the people of Israel with



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them ; and the Egyptians hurried them away, so afraid were they of keeping them any longer. Thus it happened that the Israelites got out of Egypt at last. And the Lord led them by a pillar of a cloud that went before them all day, and changed to a pillar of fire by night.

“So they came to the shore of a sea which lay between them and the road to the Promised Land, and here they found that Pharaoh had repented of letting them go, and was coming after them with his soldiers to get them back. The Israelites were terrified ; the sea before them, the enemy behind, they could see no escape.

“But the Lord told Moses that they must go forward, and He made the waves to roll back to the right hand and to the left, and leave a path for them in between. So the children of Israel went on dry land through the sea ; but when the Egyptians tried to follow, the water flowed back again and drowned them all.

“On the other side of the sea there was a great desert that the Israelites had to pass through, where the Lord did many wonderful things for them, and where He gave them His ten commandments.

"He fed them with a food that fell from heaven every day, except on the Sabbath; it looked like hoar frost on the ground, and it tasted like cakes made with honey.

"Another time, when they came to a place where there was no water, the Lord told Moses to strike the rock, and water came flowing out for all the people to drink. After all these wonders, it seems as if the Israelites ought to have trusted the Lord, and believed that He would certainly bring them to their journey's end, but they were very far from doing so. They were often falling into sin by distrusting Him, and wanting to follow their own way.

"For this cause it was that the Lord did not permit them to enter the Promised Land, till they had wandered in the desert for forty years. Moses died just before the end of their wanderings, and it was under another leader that they entered at last into the good land promised to Abraham so long ago. Their history ends the first part of the Bible—the five books written by Moses himself, which formed at first the whole Bible for the people of Israel.

"It is a great lesson we are taught by those wanderings in the wilderness. For as the

Israelites journeyed through the desert to a home they had never seen, so we are all travelling through this life to the better land that God has promised to His people. We meet with dangers as they did, with many things to try our faith as they did ; but we have always to believe that the way God leads us is the right way, however much we see to frighten us.

"If we will only do what we know to be right, and leave the rest to Him, all the dangers and difficulties shall be got over at last, and we shall enter that blessed home where our Father wipes all tears away.

"Only trust in God, and honestly follow the right, and every difficulty will be got over at last : ' the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.'

"How good and comfortable is this the last lesson, as it seems to me, of the first Bible."

"Good and comfortable!" Stephen was troubled at the words ; he knew they were true, and yet how could he follow them ?

More cast down than ever, he bade his aunt good night, and went to bed, to lie long awake, dreading Ned's anger, and all that might come to-morrow.





CHAP. X.—A WONDERFUL DISCOVERY.

STEPHEN slept heavily when he did fall asleep at last, and his dreams were all of troubles and fears. At last he woke with a start of terror; he thought he saw Johnnie cutting off Ned's head with that dreadful knife. He opened his eyes, and it seemed as if he were dreaming still, for there stood his brother by his bedside up and dressed, with that very knife in his hand.

"Why, what's the matter, Stephen? You look quite frightened," laughed Johnnie. "Do you think I am going to stab you? Look here, what do you say to this? Isn't it a beauty?"

He opened half-a-dozen blades, and held out his treasure to Stephen, who gasped out—"What is it?"

Johnnie roared with laughter.

"It's a knife—a regular beauty—a birthday present I've got for you. I've been hiding it up ever so long. I was afraid you would see it before the day."

Stephen looked wonderingly at him.

"Where did you get it?" he whispered.

"Came by it honestly," returned the other, still laughing. "I bought it of that lame old hawker you saw in the lane one day."

Stephen gave him one more eager look, and then, to Johnnie's unspeakable astonishment, burst into tears.

"Oh, Johnnie! oh, Johnnie!" was all he would say at first, but after a while his brother's persevering questions brought out the whole story.

"Ned said I stole the master's knife, did he!" cried Johnnie, in sudden rage; "and you believed him! Why, if he had told me a tale like that of you I'd have knocked him down for his pains. A pretty brother you are to take up such tales of me!" And Johnnie flung the knife on the ground, and dashed out of the room.

Poor Stephen sobbed bitterly.

"Oh, if I had only spoken out at once and asked Johnnie, or asked aunt! If I had only done right at first, I should have told

the truth about Ned and the strawberries, and not have vexed Johnnie and been so miserable!"

Vain regrets! They come to every one who has not courage to be thoroughly straightforward and true; who dreads this consequence or that consequence of speaking out, and so "wanders out of the way in the wilderness." They come too late.

Before Stephen had time to think out half a quarter of his regrets, his brother's impetuous step was on the stairs again, and he rushed into the room.

"Hullo, Stephen, don't cry; it doesn't matter, and I don't mind. I recollect how it was now. Ned saw me hide away the knife when you came up, that's what made him think I was a thief! Like expects like; and then he frightened you. I didn't tell him I wanted to keep it from you till your birthday. It was no business of his. Come, cheer up, Stephen; it doesn't matter now."

But Stephen could not cheer up; he was too much broken-hearted at having wronged his brother, and at all the evil results of his mistake. Even when his aunt had left her work to comfort him, and forgive him, he could not shake off his distress.

"You see, my dear," she said, "you troubled yourself about the consequences. If you spoke out to Johnnie, he would be vexed. If you told me the truth about the fruit, Ned would do Johnnie harm. That is a great mistake; the consequences are not our concerns. We must do the right, and leave the consequences to God; they are not our business at all. Our business is to keep His laws, and He will take care of the rest."

Stephen promised that he would try and remember this truth.

"Indeed," he thought to himself, "I have been too unhappy to forget it soon."

"Now, Stephen," said Johnnie, as they walked to school, "I'm not going to quarrel with that Ned—I promised aunt I wouldn't; but just you see if I won't astonish him."

And Johnnie laughed triumphantly. He seemed quite to have forgotten his morning's trouble; it was always the future, not the past, that filled his mind.

Stephen looked up at him timidly, and could not find an answer.

The boys were all assembled outside the school; Ned Rice came up to Stephen, who turned from him with a sort of fear and began speaking to some one else. Ned made a

grimace, but at the moment the bell began to ring, and there was a general rush indoors.

"You'll see," said Johnnie significantly to Stephen, as they took their places.

Prayers, name-calling ended, Mr. Willis told the first class to get their slates ; but there was a pause—a murmur of astonishment—when Johnnie, with a very grand air, marched up to the master's desk.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but is this your knife?"

"My knife? No, my boy! Did you pick it up somewhere?"

"No, sir," Johnnie answered in a particularly distinct tone ; "I bought it of a hawker, but some one seemed to think it was yours." He could not forbear a glance at Ned, who got scarlet, and stared with all his eyes.

"Thank you, Wright, for asking. No ; I'm afraid I must give up my penknife as lost."

And lost indeed it was ; but it is to be hoped that the lessons arising out of its history were not lost, on Stephen at least.

As he went rapidly up the school, and soon became as good a scholar as his brother, the remembrance of this earlier teaching never passed out of his mind. That he alone is the true Christian, the true *man*, who is strong

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enough to do the right and leave results to Him who knoweth all things, this was the lesson that did abide with him from his first study of the first Bible, and the experience of his young life.

And so it should be with us all. Our lives and our Bibles should teach us the same lesson, since both are the revelations of God's holy will. May Stephen's lesson be learned indeed by all who study with him the holy

TALES OF LONG AGO.



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